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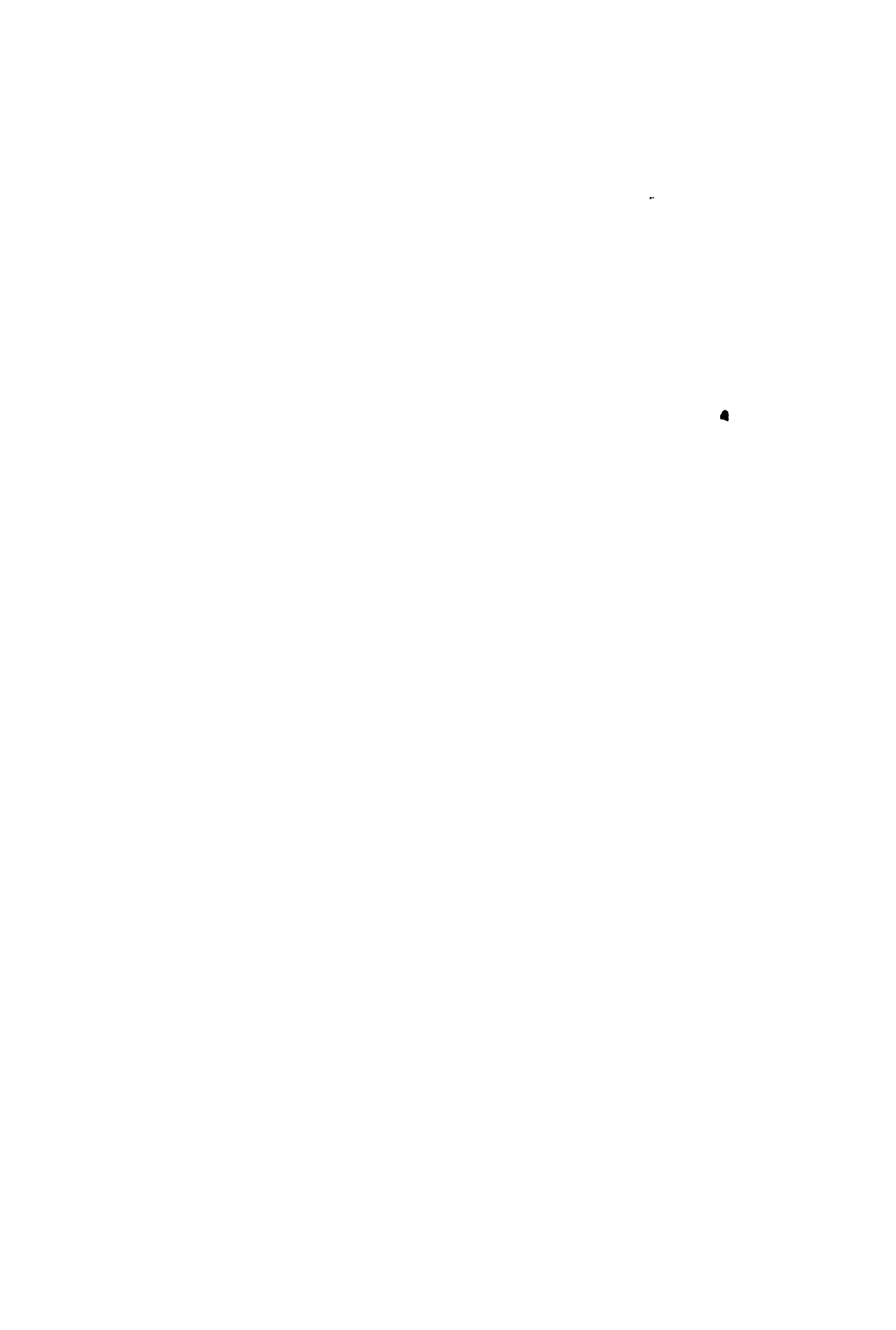
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N. B.  
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# **RHODA OF THE UNDERGROUND**





Mrs. Schuchert  
244 ...



NEW YORK  
1915



"He listened with her hand clasped in his."

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# RHODA OF THE UNDERGROUND

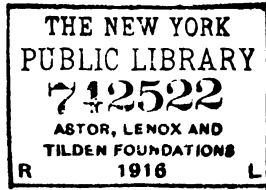
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By  
**FLORENCE FINCH KELLY**  
Author of "With Hoops of Steel," "The Delafield  
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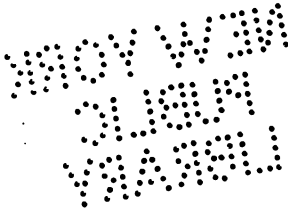
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## ILLUSTRATIONS

"He listened with her hand clasped in his" . . Frontispiece

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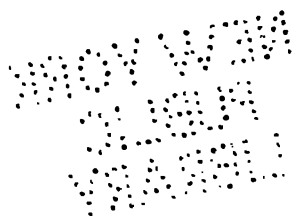
"'You won't shoot him?' she demanded, turning  
sharply around" . . . . . 68

"'Inside were a withered rose and a letter'" . . . . . 100

"'Don't Jeff, please don't!' she pleaded" . . . . . 250

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**RHODA OF THE UNDERGROUND**





## CHAPTER I

The benediction of God was in the sunshine that lay still and bright upon green fields and blooming gardens. The town, marshaled along the river side, nestled quietly under the caressing warmth. Down by the steamboat landing it stirred into sudden noisy activity as the up-river boat drew in and made ready to discharge cargo and passengers. But farther back, where the streets, lined with maple and butternut trees and white-blossomed locusts, climbed the long sloping hill, the May sunshine seemed to have kissed the earth into radiant peace. Here and there, from some white-painted cottage set in a grassy, tree-shaded yard, came the sound of a woman's voice in speech or song, or the shrilly sweet accents of children at play floated out from porch or shady nook.

The lilac bushes in a yard at the top of the hill, hedging the walk from front door to gate, lazily stirred their lavender foam and sent forth waves of fragrance. The house, uncompromisingly white and square and solid-looking, with green shutters at the windows, had a wide, columned veranda across the southward front and down the eastern side. Upon the balmy stillness in which

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it too was enveloped there came a sound of dancing steps and girlish laughter, and a young woman ran out of the front door, teasing with a leafy switch a gray kitten that scampered at her side. Her spreading skirts, crinolined and beruffled, tilted back and forth, and with a sudden twist she caught the kitten within their cage. As it peeked out, with a half-frightened face, ready to spring away, she caught it by the back of the neck and lifted it to the bend of her arm.

"No, you didn't, Prince of Walesy!" she laughed. "You're not smart enough yet to get away from me like that!" Leaning against the veranda rail she gazed watchfully down the street while she pinched the kitten's ears until it squeaked and then stroked it into purring content. The sunlight brought out reddish and golden gleams in her dark brown hair.

"Walesy, why don't they come!" she exclaimed with an impatient frown, pulling the cat's tail while it protested with growl and claw. "I heard the steamboat a long time ago." Her eyes sought the glimpses of sparkling river between the trees and she descried a thin banner of smoke moving up-stream. "Yes, there it goes! They'll surely be here soon! Now don't make such a fuss about having your tail pulled. You'll just have to get used to it!"

She began to whistle softly, stopped, cast a backward glance at the open door, made a little

grimace and struck again into her tune, louder than before. Up the street, under the drooping white masses of locust bloom, came a two-seated carriage. "Mother! They're coming! They're right here!" she called. Then with the kitten still in her arm she scurried down the path between the walls of fragrant lilac, her crinolined skirt giving glimpses of trimly slipped feet as it tilted from side to side. Unlatching the gate she stepped upon its lower cross-piece and swung back upon it as far as it would go. "Father! Rhoda!" she called out joyously, and was herself welcomed with "Well, Charlotte!" and a kiss by her father and a laughing embrace by her sister. One of the tall, square gate-posts bore the sign, "Dr. Amos M. Ware."

"Now let's take in the things!" cried Charlotte. "I'm just dying to see what you've brought! Here, Jim," to the negro who was holding the horses, "come and carry in these bundles."

Within the house there was eager cross-fire of question and answer, punctuated by frequent exclamations of delight, as the two sisters and their mother unwrapped the parcels and examined their contents.

"This is for mother," said Rhoda, shaking out a light wool wrap. "They're wearing these little shawls so much this spring. Charlotte, doesn't she look nice in it!" Throwing her arms around her mother's shoulders Rhoda kissed her twice

and then rushed back to the table piled with packages. "And I've got the sweetest bonnet for you, Charlotte!" she went on, opening a bandbox. "There! isn't that lovely, mother?" She tied the strings under Charlotte's chin and all three clustered about the mirror as the girl critically surveyed herself therein.

The bonnet covered her head, in the fashion of the days "before the war," and the wreath of flowers inside its front made a dainty frame that seemed to be trying to compel into demureness the saucy face with its tip-tilted nose and mischievous brown eyes.

The two sisters, reflected side by side in the mirror, looked oddly unlike. Charlotte's deep tones of hair and eyes and rich coloring paled in her elder sister into light brown and gray, and faint rose bloom upon her cheek. But Rhoda's straight, thin-nostriled nose gave to her countenance a certain dignity which the other's lacked, while her mouth, with its curved upper lip, just short enough to part easily from its full red fellow, had a piquant sweetness more attractive than her sister's more regular features. Her eyes, large and gray, and indeed all the upper part of her face, had a serious expression. At the corners of her mouth there was just the suggestion of an upward turn, like that in the Mona Lisa. It gave to the lower part of her face an expression curiously contradictory of the grave upper part, as if

sense of the joyousness of life were always hovering there and ready at any moment to break forth in laughter. When she did smile there was a sudden irradiation of her whole countenance. The short upper lip lifted above white teeth, the faint upward curve at the corners of her mouth deepened and her eyes twinkled gaily. But no one ever accounted Rhoda so handsome as her younger sister. Even those who admired her most thought her forehead too high and her cheek bones too prominent for beauty.

"And this muslin is for a dress for you, Charlotte," Rhoda went on, holding it up for their inspection. "Isn't this vine a lovely pattern, mother? We must make it with three wide flounces, from the foot to the waist, and the skirt even wider than these we're wearing now. And this white silk is to make a drawn bonnet for you, mother. I saw several of them in Cincinnati—they're quite the latest thing. I have the pattern and directions and I'm sure I can do it."

There were only three of them, but as they moved about in their big, balloon-like skirts, examining, comparing, discussing the purchases, they seemed to pervade the whole large room with the essence of femininity and to fill it with their bodily presence.

"What's this?" said Charlotte, taking up a small package. "It feels like a book." And she began to undo its wrappings.

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Rhoda looked, then half turned away. "It is a book—one father bought for me. You won't care about it."

Charlotte glanced at her curiously and with increased interest went on with the unwrapping. "Oh! 'Uncle Tom's Cabin!'" she exclaimed disdainfully as she tossed the book away. "What do you want to read that for? Walesy, stop it!" And with a backward jump and a downward swoop she extricated the kitten from beneath her hoopskirt, boxed its ears and then cuddled it in her arm, whence in a moment more issued sounds of distress and anger.

Her mother spoke reprovngly, in soft tones that betrayed southern birth: "Charlotte, don't hurt the little thing! Do try to remember that you're grown up!"

The girl rubbed the kitten against her face and cooed: "Well, it was its own Charlotte's precious Prince of Walesy kitty-cat and if it wants to say that 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' is just a nasty old Black Republican mess of lies it shall, so it shall! Shan't you, Walesy?"

The kitten's vehement response, slyly inspired, went unheeded as she turned again to her sister, demanding, "What do you want to read it for, Rhoda, when you know it's just a lot of stuff with no truth in it?"

"I don't know that, Charlotte. I've wanted to read it for a long time, because it's talked about

so much. And while we were in Cincinnati we went to Levi Coffin's, and they told us so much about Mrs. Stowe, and how she got some of the incidents for the story and talked such a lot about—the darkies who—try to go to Canada that it made me very anxious to read the book.”

“Who's Levi Coffin?” asked Charlotte, regarding her sister closely and noting a brief hesitation as Rhoda carefully folded the white silk before she replied: “Oh, just a friend of father's. They're Quakers and they wouldn't interest you.”

Charlotte reached for the book and turned its leaves over carelessly. “Humph! If they're friends of Mrs. Stowe they're probably just some more nigger stealers! You'll soon be a black abolitionist yourself, Rhoda, if you keep on. And then we won't associate with her, will we, Walesy! Didn't you meet any nice people?”

Rhoda paid no heed to her sister's aggressive tone. “Oh, yes! Mrs. Benjamin Harrison—Carrie Scott, you know—she and I were such good friends while I was at Dr. Scott's Institute—happened to be visiting in Cincinnati and she and I had a long talk. And I saw several other girls whom I knew at Dr. Scott's. And—oh, mother! You'll be so pleased!” Her color warmed and her face brightened as she went on. “It was most romantic! We met Mr. Jefferson Delavan!”

“Oh, did you! Where? How did it happen?”



Tell me all about it!" Mrs. Ware's eager questions and delighted face showed how nearly the information touched her heart. But Charlotte merely demanded, with puzzled interest, "Who is he?"

"Don't you remember, Charlotte?" Rhoda went on. "His mother was Adeline Fairfax, mother's dear friend when they were girls together in Virginia. My middle name is after her, you know, and it's her miniature that mother has on her dressing table."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Charlotte. "It was at her home that we visited, wasn't it, a long time ago, in Kentucky?"

"Yes—Fairmount, they call it. Such a beautiful place, just beyond Lexington. Mother and you and I visited there for a month, twelve years ago, wasn't it, mother, when we first came here to Hillside. You were only six years old then, so I suppose you don't remember much about it. But I remember it all very well and what a good time we had."

"Poor, dear Adeline!" Mrs. Ware was wiping her eyes. "She and I did enjoy that visit so much! And we never saw each other again, for she died the next year. If she had lived you and her children would have seen a great deal of each other. But do tell me about Jeff, Rhoda! Where did you see him? And how did he know who you were? He was such a fine boy—about twelve

years old, wasn't he?—when we were there. Just two years older than you, Rhoda. Did you meet him in Cincinnati?"

"No. He was on the steamboat when we went down and the captain—it was Captain Laidlaw, father's friend, you know—introduced him to us, and then he remembered who we were and we had great fun talking over the good times we had at Fairmount."

"Was his sister Emily with him? She was named for me, you know. Is either of them married yet?"

"No, she wasn't with him, and neither one of them is married. He told me his father's sister has lived with them ever since his mother died. His father died too last year and now he manages the plantation."

"Is he handsome?" queried Charlotte.

"N—no, not exactly handsome. But very fine-looking, and so courteous!"

"Then you saw more of him after you left the steamboat?"

"Yes. He called on us in Cincinnati, and we went out together several times and then it happened that he finished his business there in time to take the same steamboat back that we did."

Charlotte regarded her sister with dancing eyes. "Is he coming up here to visit—us?" she demanded. Rhoda reddened under her scrutiny. She did not always find it easy to keep her com-

posure under Charlotte's habit of making audacious deductions and voicing reckless intuitions. But she had learned long before that to betray embarrassment was to invite more questioning. She answered with apparent unconcern:

"Father asked him to come and told him how pleased mother would be to see him, and he said that he expected to be up near the river before long and he would cross over and call on us."

"Dear boy! Indeed, I shall be glad to see him! Adeline's son—how time does fly!"

"Does he own slaves?" said Charlotte, her eyes still on her sister's face.

"Of course!" replied Mrs. Ware. "You evidently don't remember the place, Charlotte. It is a large tobacco plantation, and when we were there Mr. Delavan had a great many slaves."

Charlotte sprang to her feet and poised the kitten on her shoulder. "Then you won't like him, Rhoda—and I shall!" Whistling merrily, she took some dancing steps toward the door.

"Charlotte!" called her mother reprovingly, "Do try to remember that you're not a child any more! I've told you so often it's not ladylike to whistle!"

Rhoda smiled at her fondly. "Don't you know, sister, what happens to whistling women and crowing hens?"

"Oh fudge! That's all nonsense. I heard a better one the other day—

'Girls that whistle and hens that crow  
Catch the pleasures as they go.'

There's some truth in that! I'm going to show father my new bonnet, and he doesn't care if I do whistle!"

Mrs. Ware gazed after her as she floated down the veranda and disappeared around the corner of the house, tilting her skirts and whistling.

"I did hope Charlotte wouldn't be so trying after she became a young lady!" she said in soft, plaintive tones.

"Never mind, mother. She doesn't really mean to be trying. She does it just the same as she pinches the kitten's tail, to make it meow. If you don't pay any attention to her she'll quit much sooner."

Mrs. Ware crossed the room to her daughter, pressed an arm around her waist and kissed her cheek. "I'm so glad you happened to meet Jeff Delavan," she murmured. "If he comes to see us, and I'm sure he will—" she glanced at the warmer color that flushed Rhoda's face, smiled, and went on, "What did you buy for yourself, dear?"

## CHAPTER II

"Father! Can these things be true? Oh, how terrible it is! Do such things really happen now, in this country?"

Rhoda Ware rushed into her father's office, her cheeks wet with recent tears, her voice vibrating on the verge of sobs. Dr. Ware looked up from the medical work he was reading in some surprise. For it was unusual for her to give way, at least in his presence, to so much agitation. His professional eye took quick note of her excited nerves. In the same glance he saw that she held a book tightly grasped in her trembling hands and read its title. But he did not betray in either words or manner the fact that he had noticed it or the satisfaction that it gave him.

"Sit down, Rhoda, and calm yourself," he said quietly. "What is it you want to know about? Something you've been reading?"

"Yes. It's 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' Father, isn't it exaggerated? Can it be true?"

Appeal sounded in her tones, the longing of a sensitive nature to be assured that what it has suffered in imagination no human being has been called upon to suffer in the thousandfold of reality. He noted her hurried breathing, with the

catch of a half-sob in it now and then, and as he looked into her appealing eyes the man and the father in him drew back from saying what he wished to say lest he add to her hurt and the physician counseled not to increase her excitement. But the believer in a cause urged him to strike while the iron was hot. And it was the believer that won, after a mere moment of hesitation.

"You heard what they said at Levi Coffin's, about many of the incidents of the book being based on fact. But what you have read there is only a drop in the bucket!"

As he leaned toward her across his desk and she, seated at the other side, bent her face toward him, even a casual observer might have seen their relationship. For her countenance was a copy of his, a young, soft, feminine copy, but yet formed clearly upon the same plan, even in the details of feature and coloring. His eyes, large and gray like hers, were calm and cool and judicial in expression, even when, as now, they were alight with earnestness. His shaven upper lip, also, was short, but it pressed upon the lower in a firm line, while all his countenance expressed a sort of austerity that seemed to bespeak a mind informed with intense moral conviction rather than hardness or coldness of nature. But looking at the two faces thus, one could see in hers the kindling fires of an emotionalism which would be forever foreign to him, an incipient power of emotional

exaltation which would never be within his possibilities. But if there was less of warmth in his eyes and of spirituality in his brow, poise and cool judgment were written there, and far-sightedness, their inevitable offspring. Of the intellectual, judicial type Dr. Ware's countenance showed him to be, and however much or little of such qualities his daughter had inherited from him, along with her remarkable physical resemblance, from elsewhere had come the emotional forces which now were trembling in the sensitive curves of her mouth and glowing in her tear-wet eyes.

"There's nothing in that book that couldn't be duplicated right now in the South, every day in the week," Dr. Ware was saying in low, even tones that nevertheless held such intensity of conviction that she felt her nerves thrilling with it. "And even then, Rhoda, it's only a beginning! There are such horrors perpetrated under slavery as a young girl like you can't begin to realize!"

She shuddered, and he watched her silently as she pressed her lips together and deliberately held her breath for a moment in the effort to master her emotion.

"I don't think I've ever quite realized anything about it before," she said in calmer voice, "although I've always believed, ever since I've known anything about it, that it is wrong. But I've never felt, all through me"—and she shivered

again—"just how wrong it is, until this book has made it seem all real and alive."

She hesitated, leaning her arms upon the desk, and a puzzled expression crossed her face. "But, father," she presently went on, "why doesn't mother feel as you do about it? Her father owned slaves, and until she married you she had always lived on the plantation with slaves all around her. And she still thinks that slavery is right and that the negroes are happier and better off in it than they would be if they were free. She's so kind and gentle, how can she feel as she does if this book is true?"

"Your mother and I, Rhoda, have never discussed the question. Her father was a kindly man and treated his slaves well, and so the only conditions that she knew anything about were of slavery at its best. She had such a happy girlhood on her father's plantation, where the slaves were all eager to do anything for her, that her memories of it are very pleasant. I've never wanted to disturb them, because it wouldn't do any good and it might spoil the pleasure she takes in thinking about those days; and so I've never talked about it with her, although she knows, of course, what I think."

Rhoda threw him an admiring glance, which he, with his eyes averted in semi-embarrassment at having revealed a glimpse of his inner self to his offspring, did not see.



"Mother has told us, Charlotte and me," Rhoda went on thoughtfully, "so many things about her girlhood and her father's plantation, and she has always been so pleased in recalling those days, that I couldn't help wondering sometimes if anything could be wrong that made everybody as happy as they seemed to have been in her home. And Charlotte, you know, is quite convinced that slavery is all right."

"Oh, Charlotte!" Dr. Ware exclaimed in an amused tone. "She's just a little fire-eater! But she doesn't mean half she says."

"Sometimes she doesn't, but she seems to be getting quite in earnest about it lately."

"Like all the rest of us, on both sides," her father appended.

"Mother says her father never sold a negro," Rhoda went on, "and that his slaves were always contented and happy and that the same things were true on the other plantations where she visited."

Dr. Ware's face darkened. "He didn't, while he lived. But he left his affairs in such a tangle when he died that most of his slaves were sold to satisfy his debts. Your mother was ill then—it was about the time you were born—and I did not tell her, and as we were living in the North nobody else did, anything about that part of it. To this day she doesn't know"—he was clipping off his words in a tone of impersonal resentment—"that her old mammy, of whom she was so fond,

was sold to a trader who was buying for a cotton plantation in the South. When I found out about it I tried to have her traced, so as to buy her myself, bring her North and free her. But I finally found that she was dead and that her fate, though different, had been no better than Uncle Tom's."

The girl drew back with an exclamation of horror, and her eyes filled. "Oh, father! That good, kind creature, who loved mother so much!"

"Don't ever tell your mother," he cautioned. "It would do no good and it would make her unhappy. You see, Rhoda, how impossible it is for one man, no matter how good his intentions may be, to keep back the evil that is inherent in slavery. He can't make his own affairs better than the system very long."

Rhoda was looking out through the open door, her brow puckered in a thoughtful frown, the pain in her heart evidenced by the droop and the quiver of her sensitive lips. Dr. Ware's office was on the eastern side of the house and faced a gate, opening from the cross street, through which a young man was now striding hastily.

"There's Horace Hardaker!" she exclaimed. "How excited he looks! Oh, do you suppose he's had bad news from Julia?"

They sprang to their feet and rushed out upon the veranda. "Very likely," her father answered. "The border ruffians are overrunning eastern Kansas. What is it, Horace? What has hap-

pened?" he went on, grasping the young man's hand as he mounted the steps. They pressed close to him, expectant, their faces anxious.

"Julia—have you had bad news?" Rhoda threw in breathlessly.

Hardaker's face was working with suppressed excitement and it was a moment before he could speak.

"You haven't heard?" he broke out. "Oh, it's frightful! Senator Sumner was attacked yesterday in the senate chamber and beaten almost to death!"

"My God, Horace! Who did it?" cried Dr. Ware, gripping the other's hand, his face paling.

"Preston Brooks—"

"Of South Carolina—yes, go on!"

"Senator Butler's nephew—that speech of Sumner's the other day—"

"Yes, yes! The crimes of the South! Brooks has killed him?"

"No, but he may not live. Brooks came upon him from behind, as he sat at his desk, and while he was penned there pounded him over the head with a heavy cane."

"Will the North stand this insult?" Dr. Ware exclaimed, dropping the other's hand, which unconsciously he had been gripping and shaking during their colloquy. With quick steps and short turns he marched this way and that as they went on talking, running his fingers through his

hair until it stood upright. Rhoda shared in their excitement, her nerves still tingling from her recent emotion, mind and heart alike ready to be deeply impressed by the news. With brief, sharp sentences they broke across one another's speech, turning pale faces and glittering eyes from one to another.

"Brooks's companions held back those who tried to go to Sumner's help!"

"Oh, what a brutal and cowardly—"

"If the North is not utterly craven—"

"It's the most atrocious thing they've dared yet!"

"Beecher's bibles are the thing to answer it with!"

"The sooner the better!"

"If there's any manhood at all in the North!"

After a little they grew calmer and went into the office, where Hardaker related the details of the event which was about to set both sections of the country in an uproar. Presently Rhoda asked what news he had had from his sister Julia, lately married—Rhoda had been her bridesmaid—and gone with her husband to Kansas. North and South were in the midst of their bitter struggle for the embryonic state, and from each settlers were pouring into it, there to translate their convictions into guerrilla warfare, while their friends at home waited fearfully each day as news came

of battle, murder, the burning of houses, the sacking of towns.

"We've heard nothing worse, so far, than you've seen in the papers already. But it won't be long. They're cooking up some dastardly outrage and any day we may hear that Lawrence has been burned and all the people killed. Mother never opens the 'Tribune' herself now. She waits for me to look in it first and then tell her what the Kansas letters say."

Hardaker was asked to stay to dinner, and Rhoda went to tell her mother of the guest. Then the two men drew their chairs close together and spoke in low tones.

"I saw Conners this morning," said Horace, "and he told me that they're watching his place so close now that it isn't safe to have them come there any more. And he's made up his mind to go out to Kansas anyway, and expects to leave in a month or two. So we've got to have a new station."

"Yes," mused Dr. Ware, "there must be some place not too far from the river where they can hide as soon as possible after they cross. I wonder if I could manage it here. If I could, this would be just the place. The house sets up so high that they could steer their course for it from the other side, and, once across, they could easily make their way up here after dark."

"But could you take care of them safely?" the other asked with evident surprise.

"I couldn't heretofore, but it may be different now!" and he leaned forward with a smile of satisfaction. "You saw how moved Rhoda was just now. She's been reading 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' and it's had a profound effect upon her, just as I hoped it would. She went down to Cincinnati with me last week and I took her to Levi Coffin's. She was very much interested in the talk there—you know about what it was. After she's had time to think about it—Rhoda doesn't do things on impulse, you know—I believe, Horace, my girl will be ready to help me out!"

"But what about—" Hardaker began, then stopped, embarrassed.

"I know what you mean. I wouldn't, of course, ask Mrs. Ware to concern herself actively in the matter, or to know any more about it than she wanted to. But we could depend on her to keep her own counsel. Charlotte need not know anything about it—although she'd be pretty sure to find out all about it before long. Then she'd tell me frequently and forcibly, just what kind of a pickpocket she considers me—" He stopped a moment, smiling indulgently, but went on, conviction in his tone: "But she wouldn't tell. She'd be loyal to me. And as for my colored man Jim and his wife Lizzie, in the kitchen, they'll do any-

thing under the sun to help the thing along. They bought their freedom, only a few years ago. I think, Horace, it will be all right!"

Rhoda found her mother and sister in the big, cool sitting-room, Mrs. Ware darning stockings and Charlotte at the piano, playing "The Battle of Prague." She wheeled round at Rhoda's announcement of the guest for dinner.

"That Black Abolitionist!" she exclaimed scornfully, her eyes flashing. "I shall not sit at the table with him!"


"Charlotte!" her mother chided. "Your father's guest! Be ashamed!"

"Why don't you decline to sit at the table with father?" Rhoda asked quietly, but with an unaccustomed tone in her voice that made the other look at her sharply. Her face and manner still betrayed signs of her recent agitation. Charlotte saw them and wondered if anything had been happening between her and Horace Hardaker. She did not know that he had more than once plead his suit with Rhoda and had been denied.

"Where is he now?" she asked.

"In the office, with father."

Had he then been making love to Rhoda and was he now getting the matter settled with their father? Then it would be impossible not to be present at the dinner table. But for the present she would stick to her guns. She rose and moved



toward the door, giving her hoopskirts an angry swish.

"No!" she paused to say, with emphasis, "you cannot expect me, thinking as I do about Horace Hardaker, to sit at the same table with him. I shall ask Lizzie to save my dinner for me and eat it after he goes away."

But when they met in the dining-room Charlotte was already there, arranging flowers on the table, a rose in her hair and another at her throat and Hardaker's place set beside her own. At first his manner toward her was courteous, though formal, but as the meal progressed and she smiled upon him, rallied him, and talked to him and at him with audacious little speeches, his reserve melted and his attention was gradually centered upon her. Every now and then she stole a glance at Rhoda, secretly wondering and discomfited that her sister did not seem more disturbed or make some effort to prevent her from monopolizing Hardaker's attention. She reassured herself with thinking, "But she never does show things out much."

After dinner Dr. and Mrs. Ware left the three young people together upon the veranda. Horace asked Rhoda about her visit to Levi Coffin's in Cincinnati, but Charlotte cut in with some saucy remarks that set them to laughing and when presently she strolled off across the lawn to a grape arbor at the other side of the yard, he was in close attendance. Rhoda brought her sewing from the



house and began hemming the flounces for Charlotte's gown.

There was a suggestion of triumph in Charlotte's expression and manner when they came back and all three stood under the butternut tree beside the east gate, where Dr. Ware's carriage was waiting for him to dismiss a patient. Had she not taken young Hardaker away from her sister at once and herself appropriated all his attention? But when she could not help seeing that the ordinary friendliness between the two was neither disturbed nor accentuated, she began to think that perhaps her previous surmise had been mistaken. And when Horace bade them a casual good-by, in which her keen eyes could discover no trace of any unusual sentiment, and drove away with their father, she decided that after all it had not been worth while. "But anyway it was more fun than eating dinner alone," she thought. "And when Mr. Jefferson Delavan comes—"


## CHAPTER III

We blundering humans are much given to looking back over our lives and saying, "There we made a mistake. If it were to do over again we would do thus and so, and then things would turn out much better and happier."

But if we could go back and live our lives over again, at how many of the turning points would we have the courage, or the desire, to take the other direction? How often would we care to risk any different combination of events than that which we had formerly dared? For experience has taught us, at least, how endless and how momentous is the line of events, not only for ourselves but also for a growing multitude of others, that we set in motion with each choice of the forking road. Moved by our own desires and the compelling force of outward circumstances we travel over the course the first time, choosing our route with little thought for the intricate coils of consequence that hang upon our steps. But if we were to journey over it again would not our feet drag at the turnings and waver back to the path we already knew, rather than venture blindly upon some new chain of events, leading none could tell whither and ending only with the end of time?

Thus did it happen that Dr. Amos M. Ware in after years sometimes debated with himself as to whether he made a mistake in not speaking sooner to his daughter Rhoda about the work, of deep concern to him, in which he hoped to enlist her sympathy and help. Often did he ask himself if perhaps it would not have been better for her had he laid his plan before her at once, on the very day of Hardaker's visit, when her mind and heart were so deeply impressed that there would have been little doubt of her acquiescence. But he wanted to talk with her more, to give her more things to read, and so to lead her deeper into the heart of the fires with which North and South were burning. And in the meantime came Jefferson Delavan.

Afterwards he was wont to say to himself that if he had spoken, and everything had been arranged and the work started before that event happened, the young man's coming would have made little difference to Rhoda, that then he would simply have gone away again and that would have been the end of it. But he was wont also to reassure himself with the thought that perhaps Delavan would have come again anyway, and that, even if he had not returned, perhaps it would have been no better for Rhoda. But the "ifs" and "perhapses" so tangled up his reflections that he always ended by thinking he would not quite like



to risk acting differently if it were to do over again.

Of course, there would have been a story anyway, no matter what Dr. Ware might have done at that particular juncture, nor what the consequences of his action might have been. It would not have been the story I am about to relate, and perhaps Jefferson Delavan would not have been in it. But given Rhoda Ware and given her environment, it would have been bound to be a story somewhat out of the ordinary. As to that, however, in every human life there is a story that needs only adequate telling to make it seem more interesting than life does to the most of us.

Rhoda Ware's father did not know what she thought, nor, indeed, whether or not she had any conviction, upon the right or wrong of the system of helping and hasting fugitive slaves through the northern states to Canada and freedom which in that day was known, and has passed into history, as the Underground Railroad. He did feel sure, and his pride in her increased with the thought, that if she were not convinced of its righteousness, although it was in defiance of the law, she would not engage in it. But he also felt sure that if she saw the matter as did he and his co-workers, as a question of the right of the individual conscience above the general law, she would come to his assistance with courage and enthusiasm. And therefore before broaching the subject he wished

to make sure of her convictions upon all the points that led up to this practical climax.

Like thousands upon thousands of others, her first keen feeling upon the subject of slavery was aroused by the reading of Mrs. Stowe's fateful book. She was only one of the unnumbered host for whom its emotional appeal was the first incentive to active opposition. The influence of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" upon the course of events preceding the Civil War is proof of how much more ready we Americans are to be moved by our emotions than by argument, of how much more willing we are to think with our hearts than with our heads.

Dr. Ware put into her hands Senator Sumner's speech on "The Crime against Kansas," the cause of the assault upon him, which was being read all through the north by the hundred thousand copies, and he brought her reports of the huge meetings of indignation held in Boston, New York, and other cities, and presided over and addressed by men of national fame. From Kansas the news of the sacking of Lawrence added fuel to the flame of anger that was sweeping over the North, and to the feeling of horror and reprobation in which Rhoda joined there was added in her mind the note of personal resentment. For a letter from her friend Julia Hammeron, Horace Hardaker's sister, gave an intimate account of the attack and told of the indignities and loss herself and her

husband had suffered at the hands of the border ruffians.

Rhoda was deeply moved by these events and day by day became more keenly interested, while her father, watching her closely, decided that soon he would speak to her upon the project he had so much at heart. He purposed to lay before her the whole question, tell her of the part which it was his desire to take in the work of the Underground Railroad, and ask for her coöperation.

Underneath the apparent peace in which the Ohio river town of Hillside basked in the sweet May sunshine of that day when Rhoda and her father drove up the hill on their return from Cincinnati, feeling on the slavery question ran deep and bitter. And the events which had happened since that day had intensified the heat and the bitterness until, just as all over the country, men felt that they were dwelling over a volcano which might break out at any moment, none could tell with what violence and destruction. The pro-slavery element of the town, quick to seize every opportunity of expressing its friendliness for the South, held a meeting at which resolutions were passed lauding Representative Brooks for his chivalry in coming to the defense of his kinsman and his state, and declaring that he deserved the admiration of all who believed in honor and manliness for the justly deserved punishment he had meted out to a notorious abolitionist. And then

money was donated with enthusiasm for the purchase of a cane to be presented to him which should bear the inscription, "Use knock-down arguments" and the device of a broken human head.

The anti-slavery element planned to hold a meeting two nights later at which they proposed to express their feelings in denunciation of Brooks and in praise of Sumner and his speech, to voice their indignation over the course of events in Kansas, and to ask for money for the relief of the free-state settlers and for the sending of more colonists with whom to swell their numbers. It was Dr. Ware's intention to take Rhoda to this meeting, at which he was to make the principal speech, and immediately afterward to have with her the conversation which he believed would secure her help.

But in the afternoon of that day Jefferson Delavan appeared at the door of his office and hoped he might present his respects to Mrs. Ware and Miss Rhoda.

## CHAPTER IV

“‘A felon’s blow,’ indeed! O, la, you horrid thing!”

Charlotte Ware, alone in the living-room, rocked violently back and forth a few times, apparently as an outlet for her indignation, then turned her flushed cheeks and snapping eyes again upon the New York “Tribune” in her hands. She stayed her rocking for a moment, absorbed in the article which had aroused her anger, but presently broke out again:

“‘The symbol of the South is the bludgeon!’ Oh, you wretch!”

She struck the page with her fist, but went on reading again until she came to some sentiment which gave a still deeper prod to her anger. Then springing to her feet, she crushed the journal into a ball, whipped off her slipper and began to spank vigorously the offending news. The paper flew from her hands and the kitten, which had tumbled from her lap, whisked after it. She pursued and sent it across the room with another blow, ran after it and beat it again, exclaiming, “There! That’s what you deserve!”

“Charlotte, what are you doing?” It was her father’s voice at the door, and without looking up



she answered, between her whacks at the tattered paper:

"It's that old meeting in New York about Sumner and I'm giving that horrid Beecher person's speech what it deserves, and I wish it was him!"

"Bravo, Miss Charlotte!" came quick response in a strange masculine voice, followed by a hearty laugh and two or three little handclaps.

She wheeled, her slipper in her hand, and saw a young man beside her father in the doorway, a good-looking young man, broad-shouldered and erect of stature. It flashed upon her that this must be Mr. Jefferson Delavan. Under cover of picking up the kitten she adroitly slipped on her shoe. As she came forward, blushing and confused, trying to cover her embarrassment with an extra tilting of her hoopskirt and a pouting, defiant little smile, she seemed to Delavan to be little more than a spoiled, amusing child, so sweet and dainty to look at that to indulge her would be a pleasure.

Mrs. Ware was delighted by Delavan's coming, and would listen to no other arrangement than that he should stay with them, at least over night. When she heard this Charlotte considered whether or not she should deny herself the excitement of attending the meeting that night. She had already accepted the escort of a young admirer whose sentiments were as vehemently pro-slavery

as her own, and he had confided to her that something interesting was likely to happen. Perhaps it would be just as interesting to stay at home and prevent Mr. Delavan from showing Rhoda too much attention. But there would be opportunity for that afterward, and the meeting would be only that evening. So she decided not to send word to her escort that she had changed her mind. When she came downstairs ready to go, her father, meeting her in the hall, said, with more gravity than he was accustomed to use toward her:

"I hope, Charlotte, you won't let that young Saunders forget who you are."

"Don't you worry, father," she responded assuringly. "I won't let him hiss you, anyway."

With much inward regret Dr. Ware gave up his plan of taking Rhoda to the meeting with him. She and her mother sat on the veranda with their guest and Mrs. Ware told them anecdotes about her own and his mother's girlhood and of the intimacy which had caused the young women to be known among all their acquaintance as "the two alter egos." "And after awhile," said Mrs. Ware, in happy reminiscence, "they always called one of us 'alter' and the other 'ego,' without making any distinction as to which was which."

In the days of that friendship they had had their miniatures painted, each for the other, and Delavan had brought, from his dead mother's possessions, that of Mrs. Ware.

"I thought you might like to have it again, Mrs. Ware, madam," he said, in his slightly ceremonious manner, "either for yourself, as a memento of your girlhood, or to give to Miss Rhoda."

Rhoda bent over it with eager, tender interest. "Oh, mother!" she exclaimed, "does this really look as you did then? How you have changed!" And, indeed, in her matronly figure, short and plump, there was little suggestion of the trim and graceful outlines of the young girl in the picture. The brown hair had grown quite gray, the bright color had faded from the face, and the dainty contour of cheek, chin and throat had been despoiled by the quarter-century which had since passed over her head. But although the years had stolen her beauty they had left in its place a worthy gift. For motherliness informed her features, her look was tender, and the grace of gentleness controlled her manner.

Delavan was at Rhoda's elbow, looking at the miniature with her, and now and then stealing a glance from the portrait to the girl's face. "You needn't do that, Jeff," Mrs. Ware smiled at him, "for you can't find the least resemblance to me in Rhoda's features. She's like her father in looks and disposition and everything," and her eyes rested fondly upon her first-born.

"But how much it is like Charlotte!" Rhoda insisted, and pointed out the likeness in mouth

and chin, nose and brow, in expression and in coloring.

Moved to tender retrospection by the memories that came crowding upon her, she told them about her courtship and marriage. "It was at White Sulphur Springs that I first met your father, Rhoda," she said, "and from the very start he never seemed to have eyes for anybody but me. He was from the North, you know, from Providence, and he was taking a horseback trip through the South for his health. He had letters to the Colbys, good friends of ours who were there too, and so I soon met him. Ah, what happy times we used to have at White Sulphur!" and she went on to tell of rides and dances and flirtations in which they heard the names of gay young gallants, known to them now as men of prominence in Washington or capital cities in the South.

"But father—what became of him?" reminded Rhoda.

"Oh, he was always wherever I was, as long as he stayed at the Springs, that summer. Afterwards he was with the Colbys, who owned the next plantation to ours, tutoring their boys. That was such a gay winter—something going on all the time—dear me!" She broke off into a happy little laugh and the spirit of that long dead time flared up again in the instinctive coquetry with which she tossed her head, moved in her chair and flourished her fan. Delavan looked at her and

smiled, thinking of the Amos M. Ware of those days and wondering what would be his account of that winter. Rhoda's eyes noted the movement and the expression and she thought, "That's just like Charlotte!"

"My people did not want me to marry him," Mrs. Ware went on, "because he was a northerner. But one day he came to take me to ride—two such splendid black horses they were, and how they could travel! Well, we went, for I always had my own way, and such a wild ride we had! We galloped and galloped, and I was very gay, as I always was, but your father, Rhoda, looked so serious and strange that I was a little frightened inside of me, though I wouldn't have let him know it for the world. I suppose that made me—a little—worse than usual, and he didn't say anything, but just made the horses go faster and faster, and after a while he rode close beside me and seized my arm and said— O, never mind what he said!"—her voice trembled and almost broke and it was a moment before she went on. "Well, the end of it was that we ran away and were married. Of course my people were very angry about it, but they forgave me, as I knew they would, though they never did quite forgive him. He took me away at once to New York, where he wanted to study medicine, and I never lived in the South again."

Rhoda listened with a little tremor in her nerves

and her heart beating faster. Vividly the vision came before her—the pretty, gay young woman with her wilful coquetries and the masterful young man urging their horses faster and faster—and they were her father and mother! How strange it seemed to think of them under the stress of such a wild, compelling love. That, then, was what love was like—for its sake her mother had dared the anger of her people, and had given up them and their love and her home and all her early associations which had meant to her such great happiness. The moon was swimming upward through a sea-like expanse of dim blue sky and casting its spell of beauty over the flower-decked yard, the solemn tree shapes guarding the street and the glimpses of river beyond. Fireflies were weaving patterns of light down among the shrubbery and behind it the white palings of the fence gleamed, unreal as the walls of a dream palace. Up from the rose-laden bushes, on the softly stirring air, came waves of fragrance.

Mrs. Ware was going on with a story about Delavan's mother and herself and Rhoda heard her mention her "old mammy"! Instantly the girl's thought flashed to what her father had told her a little while before, and the tears came to her eyes at the realizing sense of how his love had shielded for his wife her memories and her pleasure in them. This, then, was what love was like—but suddenly imagination drove thought away

and again she saw the vision of those two young lovers galloping faster and faster, while love plied whip and spur. Then without warning her mind played a trick upon her and there flashed across it a memory of her own—of children playing pirates, herself and the other girls princesses in short dresses and pantalettes, and the man now sitting beside her, a long-legged boy, bearing down upon their palace, singling her out and bearing her away to his treasure cave.

They strolled down into the yard, but Mrs. Ware did not like the dew on the grass and went back to the veranda. Rhoda and Delavan idled on through the moonlight.

"Do you know what I've just been thinking of?" he questioned.

"No. How could I? But—" she plucked a red rose and held it toward him, her upper lip lifting in a smile that sent a brightness over her face, "a flower for your thoughts!"

He took it, pressed it to his lips and fastened it in his buttonhole. They were passing a great bed of white petunias, gleaming like ghost flowers in the moonlight and sending forth sweet odors that filled the air all round about.

"I was thinking," he began, and to Rhoda the sweetness of their fragrance seemed suddenly to be translated into his tones and to be coursing through her own veins. Never again was she to be able to sense the odor of petunias without dart-

ing memory of how he pressed her rose to his lips and said, "I was thinking of that evening when we played pirates. Do you remember?"

They had come to the entrance of the grape arbor, at the western side of the yard. It was dark with the heavy foliage of the vines, and Rhoda hesitated an instant as she glanced at the shadows within, checkered here and there with gleams of light, and gave a faint exclamation at his words. A dim prescience, barely realized, crossed her consciousness, as of something, some destiny, waiting for her within those shadows. A broad band of moonlight, shining through the entrance, lay across the seat.

"You startled me, a little," she said, sitting down in the white glow, "because—it's very curious—I thought of that evening myself, just now!"

"You did? What a coincidence! Then you must remember how hard I had to work to beat Lloyd Corey, the other pirate, to your palace, and how I chose you out of all the princesses and carried you off? Do you remember? Lloyd and I had a duel about you, with cornstalks, that evening, after you girls went in, and I won, and after that he had to let me pick you out every time—do you remember—Rhoda—that I did always choose you? The very first day that you came, Harry Morehead and Lloyd and I talked over you and all the other girls that were there, comparing you and saying which we thought we would like best,



and I told them that I liked Rhoda Ware the best of them all and that I was going to marry her some day. That was just boy's talk, of course, but—Rhoda—Rhoda Ware—we are man and woman now, and I love you, and I—still mean to marry you, if you will have me—will you?"

He had been standing before her, bending low, speaking in quick, soft tones, in which she felt a passionate masterfulness that set her own pulses throbbing. Somewhere in the back of her mind she had a dim memory of her father seizing her mother by the arm and galloping—galloping—Unconsciously she moved to one side and nervously swept her wide skirts from the bench. He sat down beside her, and as the moonlight fell full upon her figure he saw that her bosom was heaving and her hands trembling.

"Have you—not been—too hasty?" she asked, in a troubled voice. "We know so little of each other!"

"I know I love you and want you for my wife. I knew that when we were together on the boat, and in Cincinnati, and I know it now more surely even than I did then. But if you are not so sure of yourself, if you want to know more about me, I will wait for your answer. But you won't deny me at once—you won't send me away for good, now, will you, Rhoda?"

He bent toward her, his masterfulness all gone, face and voice full of pleading. She gave him

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one swift, smiling glance, bright in the moonlight, and whispered, "No, not now—let us wait a little."

He seized her hand. It was cold and trembling. She let him hold it for a moment in both of his. "Rhoda, Rhoda, you love me a little!" he exclaimed, as he felt it fluttering within his palms.

"Perhaps, a little—I don't know," she hesitated. From down the hill came the sound of voices. "They are coming home," she went on in steadier tones. "Let us go back to the house."

The fact had not yet presented itself to Rhoda Ware's remembrance that Jefferson Delavan was a slaveholder. She knew that he owned a plantation which he worked with slave labor, but her thoughts had been filled by his personality alone, without reference to his surroundings or conditions. And during the evening his presence and her mother's reminiscences had swept all her thoughts and emotions away from the immediate present and the outer world. For the time being it was quite outside her consciousness that he had any connection with the institution of slavery.

As for Delavan, he did not know anything about Dr. Ware's sentiments on that burning question. The subject had not been mentioned during their conversations on the boat and since his arrival in the afternoon he had seen but little of his host. Mrs. Ware, with her delight at his coming and her talk about his mother and their

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girlhood days, and Rhoda's presence, had engrossed his attention. Moreover, Charlotte's performance, upon which he and Dr. Ware had unexpectedly come, had been misleading to whatever thought he had given to the matter. And that young lady was about to make deeper the impression.

Seated on the veranda steps she lamented her mistake in going to the meeting. "There was no fun at all," she declared. "It was as orderly and quiet as a funeral. I wish it had been old Sumner's funeral! And how they did talk about 'Bully Brooks'!" She caught up the kitten, which at the sound of her voice had come purring against her skirts, and exclaimed:

"Prince of Walesy, you've got to have your name changed! You're going to be 'Bully Brooks' after this! Because he's the best man out!"

"Good for you, Miss Charlotte! You're a girl after my own heart!" Delavan heartily approved. They were alone on the veranda, Dr. Ware having hurried to his office, where a patient was waiting. At that moment Mrs. Ware and Rhoda returned, with cool drinks, and the talk turned to other subjects. But Delavan had gained a distinct impression that Dr. Ware's family was proslavery in sentiment.

Later in the evening, when Rhoda went into her sister's bedroom to say good-night, she found

Charlotte sitting before a mirror with their mother's miniature, carefully comparing it with her own reflection. "Come here, Rhoda," she said, "and see how much this looks like me!"

Rhoda bent over her shoulder. The girl had arranged her hair like that in the picture, and the resemblance was striking. "I know," said Rhoda. "I noticed it at once, but your hair this way makes it plainer. You must look very much like mother did when she was your age—when they were married."

Charlotte cast a glance back into the other's face. "Yes," she said, "I must be the image of her. That's why father loves me so much more than he does you."

Rhoda turned sharply away. "Sister! He doesn't! We are both his daughters, and he loves us both."

"Of course he does," Charlotte replied calmly. "But he loves me a great deal more than he does you."

And in her secret heart Rhoda knew that her sister spoke the truth.

## CHAPTER V

Never had Dr. Ware been more surprised than he was when Jefferson Delavan came to him the next morning and said, without preliminary:

"I wish to tell you, Dr. Ware, sir, that I love your daughter, Miss Rhoda, and desire to make her my wife."

For a moment he gazed in speechless astonishment. "It seems to me, Mr. Delavan," he presently found tongue to say, "that you are being rather precipitate. Have you spoken to Rhoda?"

"I have, sir. She asks for time to make sure of herself. But she does not leave me without hope. You must remember, sir, that we knew each other when we were children."

"Oh, yes, for a few weeks, I believe! And you've been in each other's company a few hours since! Do you think that is long enough for you to acquire such knowledge of each other as you ought to have before venturing upon this important step?"

"It has been long enough, sir, for me to discover that she has a sweet and noble nature and to know that I love her. And I do not ask from her at present any definite promise. I ask only for your permission to endeavor to win her love and

her promise as soon as possible. You know who I am and I am sure you will acquit me of presumption, sir, if I remind you that my name is an honored one in my state and neighborhood. I trust you will have any inquiries made that you like concerning my personal character, and I shall be happy to give you at any time an account of my financial affairs, in order that you may satisfy yourself I can give your daughter a home and a position such as she deserves."

"Your attitude is that of an honorable man, Mr. Delavan, and if the matter goes on I shall take advantage of your offer."

Dr. Ware arose and began moving back and forth across the room. "But you are a slaveholder, I believe. Do you think it wise for two people to marry who hold such opposing opinions about a question that both think of importance?"

It was the young man's turn to be surprised. He rose and looked at the other in astonishment. "What do you mean, Dr. Ware? I thought—Miss Charlotte—?"

"Yes, I understand. Charlotte likes to talk and she says a great deal more than she means. But Rhoda and I are in sympathy on the question of slavery, and I am what you southern people call a fanatic and a black abolitionist. If I had supposed that our meeting on the boat would lead to anything more than mere passing acquaintance I would have spoken of my sentiments then."

"It seems to me, sir, that if husband and wife love each other truly, matters of opinion are of little consequence between them."

Dr. Ware shook his head gravely. "A matter of opinion? My young friend, it is much more than that, for both of you. But this is something for you and Rhoda to settle between yourselves. As for me, it would grieve me deeply to see Rhoda marry you, just because you are a slaveholder, and I must tell you right now that whatever influence I have with my daughter shall be used against your suit. Nevertheless,"—he held out his hand, the young man gripped it, and they shook hands warmly, although each saw kindling in the other's eyes the fires of opposition. "Nevertheless," Dr. Ware went on, "you have my consent to win her if you can. Frankly, though, I don't believe you can do it after she realizes that to be your wife she must be the mistress of slaves."

While Delavan was having his interview with her father, Rhoda, clasped in her mother's arms, was hearing exclamations of delight and forecasts of happiness: "Rhoda, dear! how happy this makes me! Yes, I know, you haven't given him a final answer—and that's quite right—keep him off for a while—don't let him think you're easily won—but of course you'll have him finally! Oh, Rhoda, my little girl—to think that you're going to marry Adeline's boy! If she knows—

up in heaven—she's just as pleased over it as I am! If she could only have lived to see it! And he's such a dear fellow! Rhoda, dear, you'll be so happy, I know you will—and it is such a beautiful life down there!"

She heard her younger daughter whistling in the hall. "There's Charlotte," she exclaimed. "I think I'd better send her downtown on some errand." And wiping tears of joy from her eyes she hurried out to complete her plan of eliminating Charlotte from the life of the household for the rest of the morning.

Rhoda went down to the veranda, taking with her the white silk out of which she was making a bonnet for her mother, with her heart full of tenderest emotion. Mrs. Ware's delight and enthusiasm had made still warmer and deeper her own thrilling happiness. As her fingers flew over her work she listened to the faint tones of her lover's voice, and a soft glow stole into her eyes. Delavan surprised it there when presently he came from her father's office.

"Rhoda!" he exclaimed. She saw the love-light flame across his face and the color mounted to her brow. He sought to take her hand, but she drew it away, saying shyly, "Not yet."

He went into the house to bid Mrs. Ware good-by, for he was going at once, in order to catch the forenoon trip of the ferry boat across the river. When he came out Rhoda put down her



work and walked with him down the broad path between the hedges of lilac to the front gate.

"When can I have my answer?" he pleaded. "The next time I come?"

On the instant there sprang up in her heart a something she had never felt before. It was not the first time she had listened to the pleadings of a would-be lover, but never before had there been one who had not got his answer, frank and straightforward, at once; never one toward whom she had felt this instinctive impulse to enjoy his suspense. Serious-minded offspring of her father though she was, yet it was not for nothing that she was her mother's daughter. Already she knew what her answer was to be and knew that she could give it to him at any moment. Her short upper lip lifted in a flashing little smile that illumined her whole face. Delavan drew toward her, his eyes upon the soft curves of her mouth.

"How can I tell?" she said. "There is so much to think over—I must have time."

"Your mother would be very pleased!"

"Yes, dear mother, I know," she murmured fondly. "She loved your mother so dearly. And father? You talked with him, just now?"

"He says that I may win you if I can." It did not occur to him to say anything about the doubt Dr. Ware had expressed of his success, or the attitude her father had warningly declared he would take. All that had been swept out of his

mind—he had not even thought it of much consequence at the time. And now, looking down upon Rhoda's blushing face, he forgot everything but the hope that if he could induce her to lift her downcast eyes he might surprise surrender therein. But he was to be disappointed in that, for when presently he did look into their gray depths they were merely gentle and serious.

"When may I come again?"

"We shall all be glad to see you whenever you come—Mr. Delavan—"

"At least you might call me Jeff," he interrupted, "as you did when we were children!"

"Well then, Jeff," and her manner took on with the word a shade more of intimacy, which sent his eyes flying once more to hers. "I'm sure—Jeff—" this time she said it mockingly—"mother will be pleased if you come again soon. And we'll all be glad to see you."

"And you?"

"Of course! There's so much we haven't talked over yet about those happy days we had so long ago— And we might play pirates again—if you'll bring Lloyd Corey with you! He was such a nice boy! I'd really like to see him again."

"Confound Lloyd Corey! Shall I have to carry you off, as I did that time, or shall you have something to tell me then?"

"Oh, I can't promise—" she hesitated and her voice took on an intonation as she spoke his name

that sent a thrill to his heart,—“Jeff—anything about it—what I shall say, or whether I can have anything to say then, more than now. But I would like to see Lloyd Corey again!”

Leaning upon the gate, Rhoda watched her lover's figure as he swung down the long, tree-bowered street. When she turned she saw her father coming down the path and waited there, blushing and casting up at him now and again a shy glance.

“Young Delavan surprised me very much just now,” he began. “I told him, as I suppose he reported to you, that he had my consent to win you if he could. I don't suppose, though, that he also told you I didn't believe he could and that it would grieve me deeply to see you marry him.”

Rhoda bent upon him surprised eyes. “Why, father, what do you mean? Don't you like him?”

“Yes, Rhoda, I like him well enough, personally, but you know how I feel about slavery and all who are responsible for it. Have you forgotten that Jefferson Delavan is a slaveholder?”

The color faded from her face, and into her wide, gray eyes, fastened upon his, there came a look, as of some wild thing suddenly stricken, that smote his heart. She flinched a little and he turned away, that he might not see her pain.

“I guess, daughter, you hadn't thought about that,” he went on, kindly.

"No," she repeated after him, "I—I hadn't thought about that."

"But you knew that he has slaves, that he works his plantation with slave labor?"

"Yes, father, I knew it, somewhere back in my mind, but I didn't think anything about it. I didn't think of anything but—just him!"

"But you'll have to think about it now," he said in a gently suggestive tone.

"Yes," she assented dully, "I'll have to think about it now"—she stopped, then went on with a flash of pain in her tone, "when I can think!"

"You must try to realize," her father went on, "before it is too late, how you would like to be the mistress of slaves, supported by slave labor, your welfare and all your interests so bound up with the system of slavery that you will be forced to become one of its defenders."

Her head drooped and she turned away with a little gesture of one hand as though begging him to stop. He waited a moment and she faced him again and said slowly, with little breaks and catchings of her breath: "Father! I don't believe I could do it! I—love him—I want to be his wife—but—slaves! I couldn't! I know I couldn't!"

She broke down then and began to sob softly under her breath. He put his hand through her arm and led her up the path to the house.

Mrs. Ware came out to meet them, anxiety in

her face. "What is it? What's the matter?" she questioned.

Rhoda straightened up and rested one hand upon her mother's shoulder. Mrs. Ware was short and plump of stature and Rhoda, tall and of slender build like her father, looked down into her face with tear-filled eyes.

"Mother," she began, her tone already self-controlled, "I'm afraid you'll feel badly about it, but—I don't think I can marry Jeff Delavan, after all."

"Rhoda! Child! What is the trouble? What have you been saying to her, Amos?"

"There, mother! You mustn't blame father. He only reminded me that Jeff is a slaveholder. Of course, I knew it before, but I—just hadn't thought about it. Mother, you'll think me foolish, I know, but I don't—I don't think I can marry him."

"Is that all? Dear child, you're making a mountain out of nothing at all! Come with me, dear. Your father has been putting foolish notions into your head. Come, we'll talk it over, and you'll soon see there's nothing in that to keep you apart!"

Rhoda bent her head for a moment upon her mother's shoulder and, half reluctantly drawing herself from her father's arm, which seemed even more unwilling to let her go, started into the house.

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In their absorption they had not heard Charlotte coming up the walk. "What's the matter?" she exclaimed, seizing her father's hand. "Is Rhoda sick?"

"You may tell her, father," Rhoda turned to say, as she and Mrs. Ware disappeared through the door.

"Well, what is it?" Charlotte demanded briskly, as her father hesitated.

"Jeff Delavan wants to marry her."

"Humph! Is that anything to cry about?" she commented, sitting down on the veranda step. "Where is he? Is he crying too?"

"He's gone home—he went a little while ago."

She looked up surprised. "Oh, has he? I thought he'd still be here. But what's Rhoda crying about? Because he's gone away so soon? Then why didn't she keep him? She didn't refuse him, did she?"

"No, she didn't give him a definite answer. And since he went away she has remembered that he is a slaveholder. You know how she and I feel about slavery."

Charlotte sprang to her feet excitedly. "You don't mean to say she's going to take that into account! I didn't think she could be such a goose!" She looked up at him with twinkling eyes. "Father, why didn't you take me down to Cincinnati with you, so he could have seen me first? Oh, well, I suppose he'll come back again,

won't he?" And with a toss of her head she ran into the house, stopping at the door to throw back at him an audacious laugh.

He gazed after her, an indulgent smile on his face. Did the look of her and the ring of her saucy laugh awaken some memory of the long ago wherein flitted another dainty, girlish figure so much like her that she sometimes startled him? At any rate, a still warmth took possession of his heart and drove out the slight resentment that just now crept in when his wife took Rhoda away to try to induce her to a course of action so directly opposed to his own convictions.

## CHAPTER VI

"That's just right, Rhoda." Charlotte nodded at herself in the mirror and smiled with satisfaction as she turned this way and that, surveying her reflection at different angles. "I hope you won't marry Jeff Delavan, for then I'd have to learn how to do this myself."

"You ought to learn how to make your own clothes, anyway," her mother commented reprovingly. The three of them were in an upstairs chamber used as a sewing-room, Rhoda fitting upon her sister the bodice of a white gown and Mrs. Ware, between stitches as she darned a three-cornered tear in the muslin window curtain which the kitten had just made, looking on and making suggestions.

Charlotte tossed her head and tilted her hoop-skirts as she did some dancing steps in front of the mirror. "Oh, what's the use, as long as Rhoda likes to sew and I don't! You couldn't, mother, when you were my age. I hope she won't marry anybody as long as I'm at home. You're an awful goose, Rhoda. Suppose Jeff Delavan is a slaveholder—what do you care about a pack of dirty niggers? They're better off as slaves, anyway. Billy Saunders has lived in South Caro-



lina and he says you couldn't find anybody anywhere more contented and happy than the nigger slaves down South and that they're no more fit to be free and take care of themselves than so many babies."

"Yes," assented Mrs. Ware, "it has always seemed to me that they need white masters to provide for their welfare. They really are not competent to take care of themselves."

Rhoda listened to their talk as she adjusted a ruffled fichu about her sister's shoulders, but made no comment. Nobody but she knew how wistfully, during these days, she was hearkening to arguments in favor of slavery.

Charlotte surveyed herself critically in the glass once more and patted the fichu with approval. "It's lovely, Rhoda, and I'm so glad you're a Black Abolitionist! No good-looking young slaveholder would need to ask me more than once—that is, he wouldn't need to if he knew it, but it's more interesting to make them ask several times—didn't you use to think so, mother? The more slaves he had the better I'd like him—and the more times I'd let him propose. Oh, la! How lovely it would be to have a dozen or so slaves ready to come the minute you call, and every time you look out of a window to see droves of them, all working for you! That would just suit us, wouldn't it, Bully Brooks?" And she caught up the kitten

from the floor in time to save the curtain, swaying in the breeze, from another attack.

"It's perfectly silly of you, Rhoda," she went on, as she tilted out of the room, the kitten on her shoulder, "to care any more about Jeff Delavan's having a lot of slaves than you would if they were so many horses. Isn't it, Bully Brooks?"

The kitten gave quick and loud response and Mrs. Ware, with a frown in her voice, called after her, "Charlotte!" But she heard in reply from down the hall only a merry laugh and the whistled strains of "Comin' through the Rye."

"Charlotte is not sympathetic," said her mother fondly, putting an arm around Rhoda and pressing her cheek to her daughter's, "but her ideas are certainly correct. And any one will tell you so, dear, who has lived in the South and knows what slavery really is. You've no right, Rhoda, as I've already told you, to set yourself up in judgment on a subject you know nothing about, and against those who know all about it. Why can't you trust your mother, honey?"

She put her hands upon her daughter's shoulders and looked up beseechingly into Rhoda's troubled face. "I know all about slavery, dearie," she went on, "for I lived in the heart of it until I was married, and I give you my word the niggers are far happier and better off under it than they would be if they were free. They don't want freedom. And they are so grateful to their mas-

ters and mistresses and so fond of them! Why, dear, my old mammy loved me almost as much, I do believe, as my mother did!"

Rhoda recalled what her father had told her of that "old mammy's" fate and pressed her lips together in sudden fear lest, in spite of his injunction, she might tell what she knew.

"I know, mother," she said falteringly, "at your home it seems to have been as near right as it could be; but, mother, dear, they're human beings, and I can't make it seem right, no matter how much I think about it and try to see it as you do, that they should be bought and sold!"

"That's only because you don't know much about niggers, dear child! They're not really human beings, in the sense that we are. If you had grown up among them as I did you would understand that. Charlotte is quite right in saying they are no more to be considered than horses."

They sat down on the black horsehair sofa and Mrs. Ware went on, her soft, southern tones full of pleading, one hand fluttering over the girl in little caressing touches: "If you knew them as I do, Rhoda, and knew how contented they are, you wouldn't feel a moment's hesitation. And everybody lives so happily down there! Such hospitality, such friendships, such enjoyment of life—everything so gracious and charming! There's nothing like it in the North! How homesick it makes me, even yet, to think of it! Oh, honey!

If I could only see you settled in the midst of it, you don't know how happy it would make me! And Jeff—I don't believe you realize, Rhoda, how much he loves you! You ought to have heard him talk to me about you! Jeff would do anything to make you happy!"

Rhoda's head dropped to her mother's shoulder. "Oh, mother!" she cried, "I wish—I wish you could convince me!"

When she carried her sewing down to the veranda a little later Mrs. Ware's eyes followed her with a gaze of mingled longing and misgiving. "Now she will go and talk with her father," was the mother's thought, "and he will undo all that I've gained."

Rhoda saw that her father's carriage was at the east gate, waiting for him, and she had scarcely seated herself with her sewing when he came out from his door. "Oh, Rhoda," he called, "will you come here a minute, please?"

"I'd like you to do something for me this morning," he went on as they stepped back into the office. "You know where the Mallard place is? The first one beyond Gilbertson's. They have sent in for some more medicine for their sick child, but if there have been certain results I want to make a change in the treatment. The man who brought me the message didn't know anything about it and I've got a hurry call that's likely to keep me all day. I'll give you two kinds of medi-

cine," and he began putting them up as he continued talking, "and if the child is sleeping well and has no fever you can leave this package—the directions are written here. But if not I want it to have this, until I go out there to-morrow. Don't say anything about having the two kinds, but make your inquiries, and leave the package that the symptoms call for, and tell them I'll call to-morrow."

"All right, father. I can ride Dolly, I suppose? I'll enjoy having a gallop this morning."

"If she'd only been a boy," he thought, as he hurried into the carriage and drove away, "I'd have made a doctor of her. It's a pity she wasn't—she'd make a first-class one, if she wasn't a woman." He held the thought regretfully for a moment. But, radical though he was upon many subjects, it did not occur to him that Rhoda could be a woman and a physician at the same time.

As he drove down the main street, past the law office of Horace Hardaker, that young man rushed out and signaled him to stop. "If you've got anything to tell me, Horace," he said, reining up at the sidewalk, "jump in and come along for a few blocks. I'm in a hurry and can't stop."

"A piece of U. G. baggage came over the river last night," Hardaker began as they drove on, his voice just above a whisper, "and went to Conners' house, as he had been directed. You know they've been keeping a close watch on Conners lately, and

this morning Marshal Hanscomb swooped down while the baggage was still there. But Mrs. Conners got him into a bonnet and veil and dress of hers, while Conners kept the slave-catchers at the front door a few minutes. She did a lot of talking and laughing in the kitchen, as if she was saying good-by to some neighbor woman, and hustled him out of the back door, just as Conners had to let them in at the front. He got away all right, with directions for going on to Gilbertson's. If he gets there they'll hide him in their hollow haystack until the immediate danger blows over. But the marshal and his catchers are after him to-day, and it's a chance if he makes it."

Dr. Ware's face was serious. "No, Conners' house won't do any longer—it isn't safe," he commented, in low tones. "We've got to find some other place. My house is the best, if things turn out all right. But I don't know yet how it's going to be. You met that young man from Kentucky there last week, the evening of the meeting. He's a slaveholder, but he wants to marry Rhoda."

Hardaker made a sudden, nervous movement and the doctor, casting a sidewise glance, saw a flush overspread his face. "I know, Horace—that is, I guessed," he said kindly, "and I wish, from the bottom of my heart, that she might have felt differently about it."

"So do I, doctor," the other answered grimly, "but—she didn't. Is she—does she—" he went

on awkwardly and Dr. Ware took the burden of the question from him.

"She doesn't know yet what she'll do. If she decides to marry him that will put an end to my scheme. I'd have to have somebody in the house in sympathy with the work. Rhoda is so capable, she could take the thing right into her own hands and carry it on so quietly that nobody would know what she was about. I wish I'd got it started before Delavan appeared on the scene."

"Delavan?" Hardaker repeated with sudden interest. "Is his name Jefferson Delavan?"

"Yes. He has a tobacco plantation down below Lexington."

Horace slapped his knee. "The same one!" he exclaimed softly, and went on in reply to Dr. Ware's look of inquiry: "He's the owner of that slave they so nearly caught at Conners' house this morning, and he's out with Marshal Hanscomb following the fellow now!"

Dr. Ware pursed his lips in a subdued whistle. "Then he's likely to come to my house again before he goes back. I'm sorry—he's a taking sort of chap, and Rhoda likes him."

The sun was hot and Rhoda, on her homeward way, slowed her horse to a walk and sought the shady side of the road. Her thoughts were busy with her mother's recent pleadings and arguments. A little frown wrinkled the wide space between

her level brows. "No," she said to herself, "no, father's right about slavery—and mother's wrong—she doesn't really know as much about it as he does, although she did live there so long."

Her thoughts lingered over the stories her mother had told her of life on the southern plantations, its gaiety and refinement and gracious hospitality, and into her mind came the picture of the Delavan home as she had seen it on a spring afternoon of her childhood—the long, noble driveway, tree-arched, up which the carriage swept, the massive brick house with its wide verandas, half hidden among trees, the carriage circling the great lawn and drawing up at last at the steps, and Mrs. Delavan coming eagerly forward to receive them, her husband by her side and close behind her the two children, Jeff and Emily. And then, of a sudden, it was herself she saw in the mental picture, with Jeff Delavan at her side, standing on the wide veranda and welcoming their guests. A smile flashed across her face and a tender light shone in her eyes. "Oh, Jeff, Jeff!" she whispered. "I do want to be your wife!"

She looked about her, a sweet longing in her heart. Her horse was moving at a walk down a long, sloping hill. Her eyes followed the road up the opposite rise and she saw a man's figure come across the top and start downward at a run. She wondered idly why any one should be running like that on so hot a day. As they neared each other



at the foot of the hill she saw that he was a mulatto, very light in color, but with negro blood nevertheless plainly manifest in skin and eyes. The thought flashed through her mind that perhaps he was a runaway slave and at once her heart warmed with compassion.

He was near enough to see the expression of pity that swept across her face and he came toward her with a half-wary, half-questioning look.

"What is it? Can I help you?" she asked impulsively.

"Can you tell me, Miss,—am I on the right road to Gilbertson's—is it much farther?" he panted.

"About three miles, right on, along this road."

"Three miles!" His face fell and despair leaped into his eyes. He glanced at the trees which thinly clothed the hillside. "Is there any place in there where I can hide? Are there any houses—safe ones?"

She bent toward him, looking straight into his eyes. "Are you just running away from slavery? Have you done anything wrong?"

He held her gaze unflinchingly as he answered: "I've done nothing wrong—nothing but try to get my freedom—but that's the worst of crimes, south of the Ohio River."

"Then I'll help you. I know where you can hide." He assisted her to dismount and she gathered up her long riding skirt and began to

climb the rail fence. There's a cave over here a little ways," she went on. "I haven't been there for years, but I think I can find it. Yes, here's the path."

"We must hurry," he cautioned. "They're coming after me, and they're not far behind. If they turn off on that other road back there—I'll be safe—this time."

She led the way and they walked on rapidly through the straggling bushes and timber. The hill was steeper here and the path sidled and zigzagged toward its summit, for some distance in view of the road. Halfway up the hillside it made a sharp turn around a huge boulder and plunged into a thicker growth of shrubs and young trees. As the man, several paces in the rear, reached this point he cast a quick glance at the road and saw a horseman come into view across the top of the rise.

He sprang forward, exclaiming in a shrill whisper, "Hurry! My master is coming! I saw him cross the hill!"

She drew her skirts higher and broke into a run. "Did he see you?" she threw back at him, and her swift glance caught sight of a pistol in his hand.

"I don't know. Show me the cave, and then you must get out of the way!"

"You won't shoot him?" she demanded, turning sharply round.

"I will if I have to. I'm not going back into slavery!" was his answer in a dogged voice.

They heard the neigh of a horse, over in the road, and an answering call from Rhoda's mare, which she had left tied to the fence. "Are we nearly there?" asked the mulatto.

The path sloped downward again and she sped onward, her thoughts flashing, lightning like, across her mind. If the slaves really did not want freedom, if they were happy and contented in slavery, why was this man taking such desperate chances? Perhaps he was fleeing from a master as cruel as Uncle Tom's. She would ask him—at last she could find out the truth from one of those who alone knew what was the truth.

Rhoda stopped beside a thick tangle of hazel bushes that grew against the face of a sharp rise of the hill.

"Here it is," she said. "Go around to the other side of this thicket and between the bushes and the hill just a little ways in, you'll see the opening into the cave. It's perfectly safe—only children ever go there."

"Thank you, miss, thank you!" he breathed as he hurried past her. Then he paused an instant and half turned toward her again. "You'd better get out of harm's way, quick! If Jeff Delavan did see me just now he won't stop till he finds me, if he has to burn the woods down to do it! And I won't be taken!"



“You won’t shoot him?” she demanded, turning sharply around.”



He rushed on around the thicket and did not see how she suddenly stiffened and the color faded from her face, leaving it white to the lips.

"Jeff Delavan!" she repeated. "Is he your master?"

The runaway was peering into the mouth of the cave, making sure that the way was clear, but at the amazed tone of her question he straightened up, threw back his head and his voice was tense with bitterness:

"Yes, miss, he is my owner—and also my brother!"

"What!" Her horrified exclamation made him look at her again more sharply and he saw a scarlet flush mounting to her brow.

"You needn't be surprised!" he went on hotly. "It's common enough in slavery. We had the same father. Good-by, miss! God bless you!"

Still gripping his revolver he dropped behind the bushes. Rhoda, intently listening, heard him scrambling through the mouth of the cave. "Is it all right?" she asked softly.

"Yes," came the muffled reply.

"You can put up your pistol," she went on, and even the desperate fugitive huddled in the darkness of the cave, the blood pounding in his ears, was conscious of a sharp hardness in her repressed tones that had not been there before. "I promise he shall not find you!"

Rhoda sped back up the hill, at first conscious

of little but a whirling in her head and a weight like stone in her breast. As she neared the highest point in the path she heard footsteps coming toward her. Instantly her nerves seemed to steady themselves and her mind grew clear. Holding her riding skirt with one hand she began breaking branches from the flowering viburnum that grew thickly beneath the trees. So Jefferson Delavan saw her as he hastily rounded the bend in the trail beside the boulder.

"Rhoda!" he exclaimed in joyful surprise, "you here!" In his sudden lover's gladness he did not notice that there was no answering surprise in her face. He sprang toward her, but she moved back a step or two and shifted her handful of flowering branches from the curve of her arm, holding it between them.

"Yes, I'm here—I—I wanted some flowers."

His glance darted anxiously beyond, but came back and rested upon her tenderly.

"Are you alone, dear? Is it safe? I thought I heard voices just now."

"You did," she replied calmly. Her brain was working clearly and rapidly now as her thoughts flashed over what she must accomplish.

"Rhoda, you ought not to be here alone," he went on insistently. "You don't know who may be wandering through these woods." Again his glance left her face and swept the hillside. "I am looking for a runaway now," he pursued. "I

was sure I saw him on this path, just as he disappeared among these bushes. Did you see him? It was only a few minutes ago."

"Yes, I saw him." He stared at her, wondering what might mean the little thrill in her tones.

"You did? Where did he go?"

"I shall not tell you."

"What do you mean, Rhoda?"

"I mean—I know where he is—I showed him where to hide—and—I shall not let you find him!" She had dropped her riding skirt and its long black folds fell closely around her slender figure. He stood a little below her on the hillside and as he looked up and saw the calm determination on her face, amazement overspread his own.

"Rhoda, you don't realize what you are saying," he expostulated. "The fellow belongs to me—he is my slave!"

Her face was white and stern and her eyes shining. Even so had stood one of her foremothers, generations ago, in Salem town, facing the charge that her daughter was a witch. She drew herself up and her lip, that short upper lip that he could not see part from its fellow without a thrill in his heart, curled scornfully. "He told me that he is your brother," came her swift reply.

He looked at her a moment, his face flushing, before he answered, a touch of indulgent wonder in his tone: "And you believed him? You don't



understand how these niggers boast over—things they know nothing about.”

She made a little gesture, as if passing by an inconsequent matter. “It’s of no difference. You shall not have him.”

Intensely annoyed though he was his heart leaped toward her warmly, as she stood there among the white viburnums, so tall and pale and determined. That high and fearless spirit was akin to his own and challenged his admiration. But—this would never do—she must be made to understand. He drew a little toward her again and as she looked down into his face and read his heart in it she felt her own stir in response.

“But, Rhoda,” his voice was tender and lingered over her name, “you don’t realize what you are doing.” Unconsciously her figure relaxed into less rigid lines and within her breast she began to feel a soft, insidious longing. “In hiding a runaway slave you are disobeying the law—you are guilty of a criminal act. The marshal and his men were just behind me—they went down the other road, but are coming back. They’ll be here soon!”

“I shall not give him up—no matter what they do—I shall not let you find him.” At that moment she was seeing in her mind’s eye the pistol in the fugitive’s hands and hearing his desperate words, “I won’t be taken!” Her eyes fell anxiously upon her lover.

They heard the clatter of galloping horses on the road. "That's the marshal!" he exclaimed. "Rhoda, you must not let them find you here, hiding a runaway nigger. I could not hinder your arrest. They will take you to prison!"

She bent toward him, smiling gently. "Jeff"—she began and an undertone of sweetness ran through her voice that made his pulses leap—"are you going to let them—find me here?"

For an instant he seemed about to leap forward and take her in his arms. Then his body sagged, he drew back and the protest of a strong man whose determination has been bewitched away from him was in his voice:

"Rhoda, you are taking advantage of my love!"

The smile that for him was always adorable broke like a sudden illumination over her face, shining even in her serious eyes and melting her mouth, just now stern and scornful, into tender, alluring curves. "Of course I am!" she agreed, and added, as she glanced down demurely and up again into his face, "And aren't you going to let me?"

A shout came through the woods from the road: "Delavan! Are you there? Have you found him?"

Jefferson Delavan searched for an instant in his breast pocket as he called back: "No,—I'm coming—wait for me—I'll be there in a minute!"

He took out an old envelope and hurriedly

wrote a few lines on the back. "There," he said as he handed it to Rhoda, "is proof of my love. I'll send you the legal papers to-night."

He lifted his hat, bowed, and sprang down the path. A moment later she heard him saying, rather loudly, to the men at the fence, "No, we've missed him somewhere. A lady is in there gathering flowers and if he had gone this way she would have seen him. Come, let's hurry back."

She listened to the sound of their horses' hoofs clattering up the hill and as it died away in the distance she swayed against the tree beside her and dropped her head into her hands.

## CHAPTER VII

Through all the afternoon Rhoda stayed in her room, thinking over her adventure of the morning and considering whether it would be to her mother or her father that she would tell the whole story. Of one thing she felt sure—that she could not marry Jefferson Delavan, that she could not be the wife of a man who believed in slavery and held slaves. To that decision had she come swiftly, after her doubts and longings and vacillations of the last week, while she listened to the departing hoofbeats of the marshal's party, going away without the fugitive. To both, of course, she would make known this determination, and to her father she would tell the incident about the negro. But she wanted to pour forth the whole affair to some one who would understand and sympathize and be tender with her because of the ache in her heart.

Her mother would be sorely disappointed by her final decision and shocked and grieved, if told of it, by what she had done that morning and would be able to see in the whole affair and in the conclusion to which she had come nothing but wrong-headedness and fanaticism. Rhoda knew that she could depend upon her loving heart and

motherly tenderness and longed for her caressing arms and her soothing voice. But she knew also that Mrs. Ware could never understand why, if she loved Jefferson Delavan, she would not marry him, and she winced at the thought of what a blow to her mother her refusal would be. Her father would know just how she felt about it; he would understand and appreciate the convictions that had impelled her and he would be deeply pleased. She knew just the light of satisfaction that would flash into his eye. But he would not sympathize or be tender with her unhappiness. A touch of bitterness tinged her feeling as she thought how different it would be were Charlotte to go to him with a breaking heart.

Ever since her childhood had Rhoda stood thus wistfully between her parents. Between her father and herself there was always intellectual understanding. Their minds worked alike and they saw things in the same way, just as in facial and bodily appearance there was much resemblance between them. But it seemed to Rhoda that this very physical and mental likeness had caused him to hold her at a distance. Even as a little girl he had never welcomed her affectionate advances as he had Charlotte's. She, on the other hand, had always been drawn to him more than to her mother, and she could still remember many a time when, a little thing in pantalettes and short dresses, she had slipped away with a trembling

lip and hidden herself to fight back the tears which would come because he had taken Charlotte up in his arms and kissed her and had ignored Charlotte's elder sister. As she grew older they had become good friends and she knew that he liked to make a companion of her and that he talked with her much more freely than with Charlotte. But between them there was never any expression of sentiment.

And now her aching heart was longing for understanding, sympathy, tenderness, love, all from one source, without having to make revelation of itself. What she really wanted, although she was not well enough versed in self-analysis to know it, was something that would take the place of the love she was casting aside,—or, more accurately, that love itself. She came near enough to such knowledge to say to herself, in the midst of her unhappiness, "Jeff would understand and—and be sorry, if I could only tell him all about it!" And then she smiled, seeing the absurdity of the idea. But notwithstanding her little flash of amusement at herself she felt vaguely, in the background of her woe-filled consciousness, that only the supreme love between man and woman can carry that full measure of comprehension, sympathy, tolerance and affection for which human nature forever yearns.

Finally it was to her father she went, when he returned in the late afternoon.

"I know you're tired, father," she hesitated at the door of his office as she saw him stretched, coatless, upon the lounge, "but I'd like to see you a little while—and it's important."

"Come in, Rhoda. What is it? The Mal-lard child? Not getting worse, is it?"

"No. It's—it's about me. I've made up my mind to-day, father, that I won't marry Mr. Delavan."

He sat up and across his face and into his eyes leaped the expression of pleased satisfaction that she had known would shine there at her news. But all he said was:

"You've decided wisely, I think." Nevertheless, his professional eye had already noted the signs still lingering in her countenance of her afternoon's vigil alone with her heart, and if she could have known what compassion and tenderness stirred in his breast she would have been surprised and comforted.

"But that's not all, father—such a queer thing happened as I was coming home," she hurried on, trying hard to speak in a matter-of-fact tone. Long ago, in her early girlhood, when she had first discovered in her father an inclination to make a companion of her, in her pride and eagerness to be felt worthy of such honor she had unconsciously begun to imitate toward him his own unemotional manner toward her. And the habit had grown

upon her of thinking that in his presence she must repress any show of feeling.

She told him in detail how she met the runaway slave, how she secreted him in the cave and then encountered Jefferson Delavan. But she glossed over this part of the incident, saying only:

“And I told him at once I had hidden the man and that I would not give him up, no matter what the marshal might do, and when the men came and called to him from the road he answered that the slave wasn't there and wrote quickly on an old envelope an agreement to give the nigger his freedom. He said he'd send the legal papers to me to-night and then he took the others away, so that they didn't see me at all.”

She ceased speaking abruptly and silence fell upon them. Dr. Ware was gazing fixedly at her as he searched the meager words of her recital, trying to find in them some revelation of what really had passed between the two lovers. He felt that there must have been some brief but determined conflict of wills for the possession of the slave, and he guessed that Rhoda had won by feminine wile of love. The episode drove in upon him the unwelcome conviction that the feeling between them, notwithstanding the shortness of their acquaintance, must be deep and genuine. But he remembered how suddenly and irrevocably he himself had fallen in love in the days of his young manhood and, recalling certain indications



of character in Jeff Delavan's countenance, he thought uneasily, "I wonder if he'll take 'no' for an answer, after all." He came back to her story.

"Did you give the agreement to the nigger?"

"Yes. After they were gone quite out of hearing I went back to the cave and gave it to him and told him to go on to Gilbertson's and wait there for the legal papers."


"Good! That was the best arrangement to make! If Delavan sends them as he promised I'll take them out to-morrow, when I go to Mallard's."

"And then he'll be quite free, and out of all danger?"

"Theoretically, yes, as long as he doesn't lose his emancipation papers. But if he is wise he will get out of this free country of ours"—a cynical bitterness sounded in his voice—"and go on to Canada, where there'll be no danger of his being kidnaped and taken back into slavery."

Rhoda mused for a moment. "Father!" she exclaimed suddenly, and in both voice and manner he was aware of some new feeling and access of energy that seemed full of significance. "What do you think? Is this awful thing always going to divide the North from the South? Are we always going to hate each other like this? Is there any help for it?"

"I don't know, Rhoda. Sometimes, when I see how the North is forever knuckling under to



the South, giving up political supremacy and getting more and more craven every year, I pretty nearly lose all hope. I'm convinced that there's only one way out of it—we've got to fight. And when we do fight the North will win, because we've got more men and more money. The sooner it comes the better, and I'm glad to see every new insult the South piles on us, for if we've got any spirit at all up here we've got to resent it some day."

Rhoda looked at him with intent eyes. His tall, angular figure was full of energy, his eyes sparkled and in his face shone the liveliest conviction.

"War, father! That would be so horrible!"

"Yes, of course it would. But it would end the business. And slavery is one long, unending horror."

"Yes, that is just what it is," she assented earnestly. "It is too horrible to think of!"

Again he gazed at her sharply, wondering through what upheaval of emotion she had gone that morning that had landed her so suddenly just where he wished her to stand, when he had begun to fear that her face would be turned the other way. "That nigger this morning," she went on hurriedly, "he was a mulatto, said that he—he—was Jeff's brother! Only think of it, father! What sort of an effect can slavery have upon a man to make him willing to hold his brother as a

slave, a beast to be bought and sold! It's too horrible!"

Dr. Ware began to understand. Her lover had fallen from her ideal of him and she was casting the blame not upon him but back upon the institution for which he stood. It was significant of the complexity of his nature that, as he looked upon her pale face, shining eyes and curling lip, something akin to compassion for the absent lover stirred within him, notwithstanding the bitterness of his own feeling against slavery and all it meant.

"Such things happen down south. I've known some instances that were certainly true. But it's possible that sometimes the niggers boast when they have no right to. As long as you have only the runaway's word for it, Delavan ought to have the benefit of the doubt. The Lord knows he, or any slaveholder, has enough to answer for, anyway."

Rhoda scarcely seemed to hear him. She sat silent for a moment and the animation faded from her face. "The man had a pistol," she presently went on and if Jeff—if Mr. Delavan—had found him I'm sure he would have shot—to kill, rather than be taken. He said he would."

Her father bent upon her a puzzled look. Here was still another factor in the motives, or the impulses, which had moved her to action. How much had she been impelled by desire to save her

lover from harm and how much by the determination to help the slave to liberty? He wished he knew, so that he might judge just how deeply and how permanently her renewed abhorrence of slavery had taken root. He knew that if she went into the Underground work he could depend upon her to be loyal, capable and discreet, but he drew back from asking her to take part in it unless she could do so whole-heartedly with conviction as intense as his own.

"Perhaps, then, you saved his life," he said quietly, and then went on with a deeper significance in his tone, "as well as got for the slave his freedom, which is more than life to him."

"Father, I want to do something!" she broke out suddenly. "Is there anything a girl can do? I know now that I can't marry Mr. Delavan—I—I love him—and if he wasn't a slaveholder I'd be glad to be his wife—and I know I'd be happy. But I couldn't—I just couldn't feel myself responsible the least bit for those poor creatures being slaves. It's wrong, father, it's all wrong, and horrible, and I won't have anything to do with it. I tried to think I could, for a while, because I love Jeff so much and I wanted so to be his wife. But this awful slavery would be between us all the time—and I hate it, father, I hate it as much as you do, and I want to do something to help put it down!"

He looked at her with surprise, triumphant

rejoicing in his heart. This was a different Rhoda from any he had known. She sat still and spoke quietly, but he saw that her hands were clenched and in her low voice vibrated passionate earnestness.

The black face of the housemaid appeared at the door. "What is it, Lizzie?" he questioned.

"A letter, sah, a big, fat letter, fo' Miss Rhoda. A boy brought it, jess now."

Rhoda tore open the envelope, curiosity getting the better, for a moment, of the feeling that had just burst through all her usual barriers of restraint. "It's the papers freeing that slave!" she cried. "It was good of Jeff to do this, wasn't it, father?"

Together they glanced through the document. "I'm so glad I held out," she exclaimed. "How happy that poor man will be when he sees this!"

"You see, Rhoda, you've done something already!"

"Yes, and I want to do more. Father, you do something—I don't know what—but I know you work as well as talk. Can't I help?"

She had never seen him look at her with such pride and gratification. Her heart leaped in response and she flushed with gladness.

"Yes, Rhoda, you can—I need your help. For years I've given to the anti-slavery cause all I could afford in money—mainly for the work of the Underground Railroad. But I couldn't do

much in any other way because your mother's sympathies are with the South. Now the time has come when they need my help as an actual worker. You know Jim Conners' house, not far from the steamboat landing. For a long time that has been the first station on the Underground Road, for all the slaves who get across the river in this vicinity. But Conners is going to Kansas soon and, besides, he is under such suspicion and the slave hunters are watching his place so closely that it's no longer safe. Why, this man," and he tapped the document, "was nearly caught there this morning. He got away by the skin of his teeth, in a dress and bonnet of Mrs. Conners', and the marshal and his men had been close at his heels all the morning, when you came to his rescue!"

"Then you knew about him already!"

"Yes. That is, I knew of his narrow escape this morning, and knew he belonged to Delavan. Well, you see, there's got to be a new refuge provided for them here in town, not too far from the river. For many reasons our house is the best place possible. If you help me I think I can manage it, with the aid of Jim and Lizzie, and your mother and Charlotte need know nothing about it."

"I'll be glad to help you, father, glad to do anything I can, and it will be fine to know that we're getting even a few poor creatures out of slavery. But, father, will it ever really amount to any-

thing?" She looked up at him anxiously. "Will it ever help to tear out the whole wicked system?"

He glanced at her with approval. "I'm glad you take that view of it, Rhoda. I'll answer your question in a minute. By means of the Underground Road many thousands of slaves have been enabled to throw away their chains. Levi Coffin, in Cincinnati—you remember we were at their house—has been engaged in this work for years and himself has sent nearly three thousand runaways on to Canada and freedom. The southerners hate him bitterly and because of his activity they call him 'President of the Underground Road.' There is no president, no organization of any sort, nothing but coöperation between those who live near together. I speak of it to show you how the work angers the slaveholders. They got the Fugitive Slave Law passed six years ago to try to stop it, and they are furious because it has since flourished more than ever.

"Now, I'm coming to the point. As I told you just now, I believe that nothing but war can solve this problem. It doesn't matter which side begins it, just so the fight comes. If the North won't do it because of the South's insults, then we must make the South strike the first blow. She must be irritated to the limit of endurance, and this Underground work seems to me the most efficient way of doing it. That's chiefly why I'm in it, Rhoda. It's something, of course, to help

individual slaves on to liberty, but I'm looking for the big result. And I'll be very glad to have your help, so that I can begin to do something a little more worth while. I've been waiting anxiously for you to make up your mind about young Delavan, for the situation here is important."

She looked at him with wide eyes, her breath coming fast. "And you never said a word to me about it!"

He got up and took a turn or two across the room. "Of course not. It was necessary for you to fight the question out for yourself."

They heard Mrs. Ware's voice on the veranda, softly calling Rhoda. The girl rose and started toward the door, but stopped beside him.

"I'll help you, father." Her head was held high, her figure was erect and her young countenance was almost solemn in its earnestness. Half consciously she put out her hand. Instantly her father gripped it and they stood like two men pledging faith. It was the nearest they had ever come to mutual expression of sentiment. Again they heard Mrs. Ware's voice, nearing the door, and Rhoda, calling out, "I'm coming, mother," dropped her father's hand and rushed from the room before self-consciousness had time to mar their moment of high resolve and close communion.

Dr. Ware gazed after her thoughtfully as he sank into his desk chair. "Heredity was bound to tell, sooner or later," he said to himself, "and



she's got her full share of the New England conscience. How that Puritan conscience does flourish in the blood of us New Englanders, wherever we go! In its original form I reckon it was too strong a dose for the best results—a saturated solution, it was then. But now it's diluted enough to be a first-rate general preservative of morals."

Mrs. Ware drew Rhoda to her side with an arm about her waist. "Jeff is here," she whispered. "He's waiting for you on the front veranda. Go up to your room by the back stairs, honey, and put on your pink dress. It's very becoming."

When presently Rhoda came slowly downstairs again and through the hall to the front door she heard her mother saying to Jefferson Delavan, on the veranda :

"Rhoda has some absurd, fanatical ideas about slavery that she has got from her father, Jeff, but I think you can hope for the answer you want. And you know, my dear boy, how much I want you to have it! I talked with her this morning—oh, here she is now. Come, Rhoda, dear! Jeff is waiting for you."

She passed into the house as Rhoda stepped out, grave and hesitant and gave him her hand. He held it in his while his eyes studied her face with anxious inquiry.

"Come," he said, and led her down the steps and into the path to the grape arbor. She looked pale and a little weary, but her serious gray eyes

were very bright and in her face still lingered a touch of the exalted mood in which she had left her father. She tried to withdraw her hand from his but he would not let it go, and after a moment she submitted to the firm clasp in which it was held. Once she lifted her eyes to his, but at once turned shyly away, as if she could not endure the look of love and yearning she saw in them.

“Rhoda, you are like a wild rose, in that gown, the sweetest of all roses.” He plucked a red rose, the last one, from a bush they were passing, touched it to his lips and handed it to her. “Last week,” he said, “you gave me a rose for my thoughts. Will you take this one for yours?”

“Yes,” she answered gravely, “yes, I will tell you—I must be very frank with you.”

They went into the arbor, where she sat down on the bench and he stood before her, just as they had done in the moonlight on that evening that seemed now so long ago. The sun, drooping low, sent level shafts of yellow light through the foliage, which glowed darkly against the western brilliance. They fell upon her fair hair and made round her head a sort of aureole. Out of this background her pale face and shining eyes, still illumined by the high thoughts which had lately filled her mind, looked up to meet the adoration which beamed in his countenance. Unconsciously the love light leaped into her own eyes in quick

response, and for an instant they gazed deep into each other's hearts. Then he bent toward her with outstretched arms.

"Rhoda!" he whispered. "You love me!"

As if suddenly roused from a dream she drew back, and with one hand warded him away. "I can't marry you, Jeff, I can't marry you!" she exclaimed in hurried tones.

"But you love me, Rhoda,—I saw it in your eyes! Don't say you don't!"

She straightened up and, watching her eagerly, he saw the effort with which she regained her self-control. "Listen, Jeff. Sit down here on the bench beside me, and I'll try to tell you how it is. I—I do love you—no, don't take my hand—don't touch me—I've loved you all the time. When you went away, last week, I knew I was going to tell you 'yes,' sometime, but I just wanted to make you wait a while—" She flashed her sudden, irradiating smile upon him and he started forward and seized her hand. She drew it away and went on hastily:

"But I hadn't thought then—I knew it of course, but I hadn't thought of it—I hadn't thought of anything but just you—about your owning slaves and believing in slavery. And ever since I remembered it I've been trying and trying to convince myself that I wouldn't mind, that I could make it seem right—but it's no use, Jeff. I can't do it."

He looked at her, puzzled, vainly trying to un-

derstand her point of view. "But, Rhoda, I can't see what difference that makes. If you love me and I love you—and heaven knows I do, dear heart—I can't see why a matter of opinion should keep us apart. Look at your father and mother. He is violently opposed to slavery and she still believes in it, and yet they loved and were married and have lived happily together. Why can't we do the same?"

"But this is different. Mother just gave up things she liked and the kind of life she enjoyed. I could do that—oh, I'd love to do that, for you—for any one I loved. But she didn't have to become part of something that she thought was wrong. I can't marry you, Jeff, because I know that slavery is wrong, wicked, horrible, and I simply couldn't endure being part of it and having to uphold it."

He rose and walked back and forth in front of her. "This is your father's influence," he said resentfully. "He told me that he would use it against me."

"No, you must not blame father," she responded quickly. "He has said very little to me about it, and he told me that it was something I must settle with my own conscience. And mother has said everything she could think of to persuade me. I've worked it out myself, and I know that I can't marry you—but, oh, Jeff! I want to be your wife more than anything in the world!"

It was almost a glare with which he surveyed

her as she uttered her last words. His hands, hanging at his sides, were clinched. "Rhoda, this is fanaticism gone mad!" he exclaimed.

She rose and stood before him. "You will have to call it whatever it seems to you. To me it is the command of my conscience, and I've got to obey it."

"Did that—incident—this morning have anything to do with your decision?" he demanded.

"Something, perhaps—no, I am sure I should have seen things as I do now, anyway, after a little. That only made me see the truth more quickly and more clearly."

"The truth?" he queried. "You mean—"

"I mean, it made me see that I could never regard slavery as anything but wrong and monstrous and criminal and that I could never, never make myself a party to it."

"But, Rhoda, this is absurd. You've never lived in the South and you don't know anything about it. You don't know how necessary it is for us down there and how well it works out!"

"I don't have to live there to know that it is a wicked thing to buy and sell human beings as though they were horses or pigs. But it's no use to argue about it, Jeff. You believe in it and I don't—I hate it, I hate it! And I wish I could tear it down, myself, and destroy it forever!"

Her head was high, her eyes glowing and her voice, low almost as a whisper, thrilled with pas-

sionate conviction. His eyes yearned over her for a moment and then, "Rhoda! Rhoda Ware!" he exclaimed. "You must be mine! I shall not give you up because of this foolish notion of yours!"

She drew back and as she spoke she made evident but unavailing effort to keep all feeling out of her voice. "It's no use for us to talk any more about it, Jeff. My mind is made up, and I've told you I can't marry you. It only makes us the more unhappy to keep on talking about it. I think we'd better consider that it's ended now, for good."

"No!" he exclaimed. "It isn't ended! As long as you love me I'll not give you up! I'll go now, but some day I'm coming back, and I'll win you yet, Rhoda Ware!" He seized her hand in both of his and held it against his heart. Taken aback by his sudden outburst she did not try to withdraw it, but let him press his lips twice and thrice upon it. Then, without another word, he strode out of the arbor, down the path, and was gone.

## CHAPTER VIII

Dr. Ware noiselessly closed the door of his wife's bedroom and walked softly downstairs. "Can we have supper at once, Rhoda?" he inquired of his daughter at the door of the dining-room. "Good! I'm called over to the other side of town and I want to get away as quickly as possible. It's likely I'll have to stay most of the night—maybe until morning. Are you intending to go to the party to-night?"

"I was, father, but if you're going to be away I'd better stay with mother. How is she to-night?"

"It's the worst attack of sick headache she's had in a long time. But I hope she will soon be able to go to sleep, and if she sleeps well all night she will be much better to-morrow. She doesn't want anything now, but you might look in very quietly after a little and see if she is asleep. Do you mind missing the party?"

"No, not at all, father. But Charlotte—" she looked uncertainly across the table at her sister. "Do you think Charlotte better go without me?"

"Of course you do, don't you, father?" Charlotte promptly interrupted, with a coquettish look at Dr. Ware, to which he responded with a fond

smile. "Isn't Horace Hardaker a good enough chaperon for anybody?" she went on.

"Horace Hardaker!" her father exclaimed in surprise. "What's become of Billy Saunders? Have you quarreled?"

"No—he hasn't. He was impertinent this afternoon—wanted to kiss me, and I told him he shouldn't speak to me for a month. So I asked Rhoda if I couldn't go with her and Horace."

Dr. Ware laughed indulgently. "Horace will take good care of her, Rhoda. It's all right for her to go with him. But I'm surprised, Charlotte," he went on, frowning at her with mock seriousness, "that a young lady of your convictions should be willing to go to a party with a Black Abolitionist!"

"Aren't you afraid to let him go with me, father?" she mocked in reply, her eyes dancing. "Suppose I should convert him to slavery before we get back, and make him promise to vote for Buchanan!"

"You minx!" he said fondly, as he stopped to give her hair a rumpling caress. Then with altered manner he turned to Rhoda with some directions for her mother's comfort and messages for certain patients if they should call during the evening.

The making of Charlotte's toilette, at which Rhoda assisted, was enlivened by much gaiety of spirit on the part of the younger sister. Charlotte had put aside the teasing humor in which she so



often indulged and was more affectionate than usual. Rhoda warmed to her in response and was delightedly absorbed in helping to deck her for the evening's merrymaking. They laughed softly together at her little flashes of fun, which were so frequent that finally Rhoda exclaimed, smiling down upon her fondly: "You're hatching up some mischief, sister, aren't you?"

Charlotte giggled. "Oh, I'm just thinking how I'll punish Billy Saunders!"

"And make him want to kiss you more than ever!" warned Rhoda gaily.

"He shan't, all the same!" Charlotte laughed over her shoulder as she tilted out of the room.

From the veranda steps Rhoda bade Charlotte and Horace Hardaker good-night, and as they passed down the broad front walk between the lilac hedges called out gay nothings after them and laughed at her sister's saucy rejoinders. When they disappeared down the street she went back into the house, softly humming to herself, for the merriment still stirred in her heart. She peeped into her mother's bedroom and smiled with gratification as she saw that the invalid was at last sleeping soundly. Then she made a trip to the kitchen to give Lizzie directions concerning breakfast and afterward sat down in the living-room for a quiet hour or two of reading.

It was in the early days of October, and the presidential campaign of 1856 was at its height.

Mighty waves of political enthusiasm were sweeping the country and stirring it to its depths, as it had never before been stirred. The youthful Republican party was already showing a marvelous growth. From the South were coming open threats of secession in case Frémont should be elected.

Rhoda was intensely interested and under the guidance of her father was eagerly following the progress of the campaign. She sat down now with a little pile of its literature on the table beside her and took up first a pamphlet containing George William Curtis's oration on "The Duty of the American Scholar to Politics and the Times." The quiet, intense conviction which glowed through its polished phrases set her pulses to throbbing. She read it through rapidly once, then went back and studied carefully the arguments, breathing high aspirations and noble ideals, by which he advanced to the conclusion that the prime duty of the scholar in that crisis was to work to his utmost for the election of Frémont.

She knew that the oration was being read by scores upon scores of thousands, for her father had told her of its enormous circulation and of its effect upon thinking people throughout the North. Her hand trembled as she laid it down and went out upon the veranda. She tried to form in her mind some idea of all those masses of people moved as she was feeling herself moved at that

moment by the orator's inspiring sentences and stirred as she was stirred by the desire to go forth as to a crusade and with mind and heart and hand work for the success of the party that would put an end to the extension of slavery.

"Oh, he will surely be elected—he must be elected!" she whispered, nervously clasping her hands. Then she wondered, if Frémont should be successful, would there follow secession and war—the war which her father believed to be the only means for the cutting of the Gordian knot into which North and South had tangled themselves. And then came quickly apprehensive thought of that ardent and determined lover, on the other side of the fateful river. She shivered a little and told herself that the nights were already growing much cooler. Presently she would go upstairs, she thought, and, perhaps, she would read again the letter that had come two days before from Jefferson Delavan.

She went back to her reading and looked through some recent newspapers. In the New York "Times" she read an account of a great meeting in Wall Street, where, from the steps of the Merchants' Exchange, Speaker Banks, of the House of Representatives, had addressed a mighty assemblage of twenty thousand earnest men. In Pittsburg had been held a monster mass-meeting of a hundred thousand. Everywhere there had been meetings,

speeches, torchlight processions, bands, cheers, enthusiasm.

Rhoda had herself joined in that staccato cry of the campaign, "Free speech, free soil and Frémont!" only a few nights before when she and Marcia Kimball and Mrs. Hardaker and others of her friends had leaned from the windows of Horace Hardaker's office and with waving handkerchiefs and responding cheers had added to the enthusiasm of the Republican procession sweeping down the street. Her father, heading one division and Horace leading another, had saluted them with waving torches and louder cheers. Her mother and sister had stayed at home that night and neither of them, by word or look, had shown afterwards that they knew a torchlight procession had taken place. But when the Democrats had had their meeting and procession a week earlier Mrs. Ware and Charlotte had gone under the escort of Billy Saunders.

With close attention she read too of the great meetings that were being held all over the North, and the money that was being donated by rich and poor alike in aid of the free-soil settlers in Kansas. Recently she had had a long letter from Julia Hammerton, Horace's sister, giving intimate account of the perilous times through which they were passing and of the riot and pillage and bloodshed which ravished the border. Her anxiety for her friend doubled the interest with which she

perused the reports from Lawrence and Topeka. She exclaimed with horror every now and then, and at last with head bowed upon her clasped hands she whispered: "Oh, God in heaven, grant the election of Frémont, and stop all this, I pray, I pray!"

She sat musing for a while upon what she had read, but her thoughts would wander to the grape-vine arbor, and again and again across the ardent longings for the success of the Republican cause which filled her mind would come the image of Jefferson Delavan as he held her hand to his heart and declared, "I shall win you yet, Rhoda Ware!"

A deep flush dyed her cheeks and muttering, "Dear God, forgive me, that I cannot help thinking of him even at such a time!" she rose and folded the papers. Then she carefully put them away in her father's office; for Charlotte did not hesitate, if she came across such publications in any other part of the house and happened to be in an audacious mood, to put them with laughing defiance into the fire.

In her room she moved about restlessly, going now and again toward her bureau, then turning away. At last she opened one of the drawers and from one corner hidden away under ribbons and handkerchiefs, took a small box tied with a white ribbon. For some moments she clasped it tenderly in both hands, her eyes fixed on the floor. Then, as she sank into a chair, the barriers of her will



"Inside were a withered rose and a letter."

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gave way and with trembling fingers she took off the cover.

Inside were a withered rose and a letter. She kissed the rose and caressed it in her palm and held it against her cheek—had not he held it to his lips that day in the arbor when she told him she would not marry him? Then she unfolded the letter and read again its brief sentences. Already she knew them, every word, for in the two days since she received it her traitor heart had sent her, against her will, to read it many times. It was dated in Cincinnati, where, he said, he was likely to remain several days more, but before returning home he intended to go on up the river to Hillside, where he hoped to have the pleasure of calling again upon Mrs. Ware and herself. It was written in courteous, formal phrase, and Rhoda's eyes studied the lines as though searching for some hidden expression of the love that she knew was behind them.

"Ought I to write and tell him he'd better not come?" she asked herself, as she had done a dozen times already, but still unable to decide that she would request him not to make the visit. Her heart was longing to see him again, but what she said to herself was, "It would be a disappointment to mother if he should not come."

Oh, traitor heart, that with its insidious desires undermines the defenses of the will and levels to the dust the walls of human determination! If



wishfulness stand within the gate when temptation knocks outside it is only the sternest "no," to both of them, over and over again, resolute and unchanging and giving way not so much as a hair's breadth, that can save the day. If man's desires always squared with his knowledge of the right perhaps the world would be a cleaner and a sweeter place to live in. But it would lack the inspiring savor of that grim struggle between them, as old as the race, by which humankind has mounted a few of the steps toward heaven. Man's inability to say "no" to himself, stoutly and often, is responsible for more of his ills than is all "man's inhumanity to man." And to dally with desire, to argue with the traitor within the gates, to listen for a moment to his specious pleading, is to make it ever harder and harder to utter the one blunt word that alone brings peace.

Doubtless Rhoda did not know, for she was not much given to introspection, that if she did not come to quick and sharp conclusions with the insurgent within her own breast she was but lengthening the conflict and making it the more difficult to stand to the line she had set. She was quite sure of her determination that she would not marry Jefferson Delavan and she would have been amazed and incredulous had any one told her that even by this yielding to her love in the privacy of her own room and debating with herself as to whether or

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not she should see him again she was throwing doubt upon the issue.

So she sat there fondling the withered rose, which his lips had touched, and the letter, which his hand had written, and thinking that it would do no harm if he should come again, for they would meet hereafter merely as friends. Surely they were both strong enough to be just good friends, and to keep hidden whatever might be in their hearts. They were so congenial, they enjoyed each other's society so much, why shouldn't they have the pleasure of meeting now and then? And her mother was so fond of him, it really would not be fair to her to tell him that he must not visit them. Yes, it would surely be for the best, and to-morrow she would ask her mother to write and say they would be glad to see him whenever he should come. Her heart gave a little bound at this victory and her lips unconsciously formed themselves into the tenderest of smiling curves as she pressed them upon the withered rose. Then she put the box carefully away, blew out her candle and knelt beside the open window.

Her room was in the southeast corner of the house, and the moon, dwindling past its half, bounded up from behind the wooded hills and saw upon her face the same tender look of smiling happiness. Presently, upon the still night air came the faint sound of cautious footsteps. She turned her eyes, that had been brooding upon the star-

filled sky while her spirit wandered in dream-filled Elysian fields, downward to the earth. She could dimly make out a woman's figure coming up the middle of the street.

A lantern hung on one of the posts of the east gate, beside her father's sign. But it had now a double purpose. Rhoda watched as the figure came slowly on, stopped at the gate, glanced warily about, and seemed to read the sign, "Dr. Amos M. Ware." By the dim light she could see that the woman's face was dark and that she held a child by the hand. Instantly the girl's spirit was upon the earth again. With noiseless feet she rushed downstairs, through her father's office, and out upon the veranda. The wanderer was climbing the steps and looking doubtfully about, as if uncertain what she ought to do next.

"You're in the right place," said Rhoda assuringly, speaking barely above a whisper. "I am your friend—come in."

She hurried the woman into the office, pulled down the shades and lighted a candle. Then she saw that the fugitive, besides the child, perhaps four or five years old, which she led by the hand, carried a baby underneath her shawl. The girl drew a swift breath that was almost a sob.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, running to the woman and putting her two hands gently upon her shoulders, "Oh, you poor thing! You poor thing!"

The room occupied by Jim and Lizzie, the two

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colored servants, was next to the office, at the northeast corner of the house. Darting out on the veranda again, Rhoda ran to their window and rapped gently four times. In a few moments Jim opened the door.

"Tell Lizzie to get up," she whispered. "A poor woman with two children is here. I've got them in the office now, but you'd better let me bring them into your room as quickly as possible. They must have some supper and a little rest, and then we'll decide what's best to do."

Lizzie's face appeared above Jim's shoulder. "All right, Miss Rhoda," she was saying in subdued but hearty accents, "you all kin come right in—in two minutes."

The runaways were soon eating a supper of cold meat and bread and milk, which Lizzie hurried into the room. Rhoda nodded and smiled at her and her husband.

"Now," she said coaxingly, "you and Jim will let them have your bed a little while, won't you? Jim can go in the office and lie down on the lounge. They must have some rest, for they ought to go on to-night. It wouldn't be safe to try to keep them here to-morrow, for Charlotte would be sure to discover the children. Father is not likely to get back before morning—so I'll drive them on to Gilbertson's. No, it's all right"—as Jim made a movement of protest. "Dolly is in the stable—you can hitch her to the two-seated carriage.

I'm not the least bit afraid, and it will be much safer for me than you. Charlotte will be home soon. We'd better not do anything more until after she gets in and goes to sleep. But we ought to start in about three hours. Have the carriage ready, Jim, and I'll be down. Now, you poor thing, you and these babies must lie down and get some sleep."

When they were ready to start, Rhoda put the child, still asleep, into a nest of rugs on the carriage floor. The woman, with the baby hugged to her breast, she took on the front seat. "If we should happen to meet any one," she said, "they'd take less notice if we were sitting together sociably like this. If you see father when he comes home, Jim, tell him where I've gone. And, Lizzie, you'll be sure to look out for mother as soon as she wakens in the morning, won't you? If she asks for me tell her I've gone on an errand for father."

The street, going on northward, passed a few more houses and then became a country road. The Ware house stood on the top of a long, gentle rise from the river. From the summit the road dipped down into a shallow valley, then mounted another longer and steeper ascent, whence it passed into a region partly wooded and partly filled with farms.

They drove on without speaking until they had passed the last of the houses. Rhoda's thoughts were busy with the woman beside her, wondering

what awful pressure of desperation had sent her, with these little ones clinging to her hands, upon the perilous road toward freedom. The fugitive was a good-looking young mulatto, not much older than herself. In her speech and manner Rhoda had already noted the lack of a certain suppressed fire which she had seen in some of the refugees, and especially in the slave whose emancipation papers she had won from Jefferson Delavan. In this one there was instead a patient, pleading resignation which seemed to her eloquent of the wrongs of the helpless race. It appealed to her from the big, mournful eyes of the child when, mutely trustful, he let her take him from his mother's arm and lay him upon the bed. It was tugging mightily at her heartstrings as they drove down the dim road, her eyes on the faint track that gradually opened out of the darkness. Her heart was all one sweet compassion and brooding tenderness. But she did not speak until they were well past the last house of the town and beyond chance of any wakeful ear.

"Have you come very far? Has it been hard?" she asked in subdued tones.

"Yes, miss, it's seemed a long way." The woman used good English, and her gentle manner showed that she must have been well trained. "But I reckon it wasn't really so far. It's just a week ago to-night that I took out. We've had to hide in the daytime and walk at night, mostly. Once

a man met us and hid us in a wagon under some hay and took us right far. Sometimes I had to carry both the children and then I couldn't come so fast. Andy was right good for such a little fellow. He'd run most all the time. I told him we were going to see his pappy and he's been expecting to find him every time we stop."

"Your husband has got away, then? Is he in Canada?"

"Yes, miss. He took out last June."

"Did they follow you? Were you afraid of being caught and taken back?"

"Eleven of us left at the same time, from three plantations. We kept together the first night, and then we divided. I wanted to come the same way my husband had. The man who came down there and told us how to go and what to do said it would be safer for us to divide, and he said that if I thought I could make the trip alone it would be better for me, because they wouldn't think I'd leave the others. He told me not to be afraid, so I wasn't."

The quick tears sprang to Rhoda's eyes at thought of this childlike trust and simple steadfastness. "Do you know who the man was?" she asked.

"No, miss, I don't know his name. He was a young man and so kind looking you knew right away that you could trust him. He came out from Lexington about two weeks ago and we all

thought he was just after birds. He wanted to get bird skins and he paid some of the children who could catch birds in snares, so the skins would be whole. But after a day or two word was whispered round that he wanted to see the slaves who would like to be free."

Rhoda nodded. "Yes, I know him! He was here only a month ago, getting names of people who would help the runaway slaves and what they would do for them. He was at our house and went right on down into Kentucky to let the slaves know how they can escape from slavery. His name is Alexander Wilson."

"Yes, miss. I didn't hear his name. I'd been powerful anxious to get away ever since my husband took out, so I went to the meeting, in our preacher's house. The man had seen Andrew, my husband, in Canada, and he had sent me some money and word to follow him as soon as I could. Oh, miss, he's free now, and he's earning money, his own money, and making a home for us!"

For the first time in the woman's simple narrative the note of deep feeling broke through her tone and manner of settled, mournful resignation. The childlike wonder in her voice as she uttered her last sentence touched her listener deeply.

"There are no slaves in Canada," Rhoda said gently. "You'll be free too and perfectly safe when you get there. What made you and your



husband dissatisfied in the first place?" she continued. "Did you have a hard master?"

"No, miss, he's a right kind man to his slaves, better than his sister. She'll be married some day, and we all thought the slaves might be divided then and maybe some of us sold down south." She was silent for a moment, a suspended accent in her voice, and Rhoda waited. "Master was always right good to Andrew. There was a reason—" She checked herself, as if some innate delicacy prevented her from saying more, and went on: "But Miss Emily would have sold him if she could. She didn't like him."

"Miss Emily!" Rhoda exclaimed, a catch in her breath.

"Yes, miss, master's sister, who has a share in the slaves and everything. But Andrew's free now! He can't be sold now!" Her voice was full of happy satisfaction.

"But you'll soon be in Canada, and then you'll be free too, just as free as he is," Rhoda told her assuringly, thinking that the slave woman had not yet realized the freedom to which she was fleeing. The girl spoke calmly and compassionately, but at her heart there was a quick throbbing.

"I mean he's surely free, miss! He's got his free papers! Master followed him and most caught him, the man told me, and a young lady hid him in a cave. Master Jeff came and she persuaded him to give Andrew his free papers. Oh,

miss! I wish I could see that young lady!" At last the refugee's feeling had broken through her manner of subdued and patient resignation. Her voice was trembling with eagerness and in the moonlight Rhoda could see the tears rolling down her cheeks. "I'd do anything for her, anything!"

A lump swelled in Rhoda's throat. She leaned forward to tap her horse to a faster pace along a level stretch of road, then lifted her eyes to the sky and whispered, "O God, I thank thee!"

"What is your name?" she queried as she leaned back again.

"My name is Lina, miss,—Carolina, but I'm always called just Lina. My husband's name is Andrew Delavan. We took master's name."

"Andrew is doing well in Canada, I think you said?"

"Yes, miss. He's got some land and he's building a log house for us. It will be our own!"

"Well, Lina, I want you—can you write?—after you get there I want you to write a letter to me—I'll write down my name and address for you—and tell me about your home and whether or not you and Andrew like being free. I think perhaps I know that young lady you spoke of and I'll show her your letter. It will give her more pleasure than anything else you could do."

## CHAPTER IX

It was still early the next day when Horace Hardaker appeared at Dr. Ware's east gate and looked anxiously around for signs of life. After a little he saw Jim at work in the stable and hurried thither.

"Good morning, Jim! Is the doctor at home?"

"Yes, sah, I s'pose he is, though I hain't seen him. I reckon he's heah, sah, for heah's Prince and the buggy he used last night. Do you want to see him, sah?"

"Yes—no, that is—I reckon he didn't get in until pretty late?"

"I reckon you all are right, sah! I reckon it must a' been pow'r'ful late!"

"Then don't disturb him now. I'll see him later in the day." Hardaker turned and walked a few steps, as if going away, his head bent and his eyebrows wrinkled, then hesitated and came slowly back. "Miss Rhoda—is she around anywhere?"

Jim came close and in low tones told briefly the happening of the night before. "Miss Rhoda, she hain't got back yet and I'se begun to feel anxious about her."

"She probably waited at Gilbertson's until morning, and then stopped for breakfast. I dare say she's all right, but if you'll saddle up Prince for me I'll ride out that way and make sure."

Trotting along on the road toward Gilbertson's Horace Hardaker seemed to be uneasy of mind. His brows were wrinkled, his lips pressed together, and every now and then he made an impatient exclamation. He was a young man, still under thirty, but he had already acquired a good law practice and was becoming noted throughout his own and adjoining countries for his success in jury trials. His sandy complexion, bright blue eyes and the round, boyish contour of his cheeks made him look even younger than he was. Countenance and expression both indicated the emotional temperament that was at the bottom of his success in jury pleading. It rarely needed more than three sentences of an address to the twelve peers in the box to sweep him into the full tide of ardent conviction of the merits of his case. Whatever may have been his secret thought about his client before, Hardaker always believed in him enthusiastically by the time he had been talking five minutes. Moreover, he was able, with remarkable frequency, to make the jurymen believe in him too.

Just now he was asking himself, "Shall I tell her about it?" and the perturbation which the problem caused him was evident in his counte-

nance. An uneasy shifting in his saddle and a shake of his head showed that the telling, whatever it might be, would be an ordeal from which he shrank.

"But I'd as soon tell her as the doctor," his thoughts went doubtfully on, "and I don't know but it would do more good. Hang me if I don't need advice from somewhere inside the family!" Another irritated exclamation broke from his lips. But the impatience and anxiety of his manner abated somewhat as he went on considering whether or not he should confide his trouble to the absent Rhoda.

"She's got so much good sense," he told himself, "and she understands about things better than most girls do, and there's no nonsense about her. She knows how to be a good friend too—I reckon she and the doctor are the best friends I've got, even if she won't marry me—and that makes it all the worse!" he exclaimed, looking as if there were a bad taste in his mouth.

As he crossed the top of one hill he saw Rhoda driving down the long slope of the next. With a flourish of her carriage whip she responded to his hat-waving salute.

"Let me hitch Prince on behind and get in and drive you back," he said, as they met at the bottom of the hill. "So you had some U. G. baggage to deliver last night?" he continued, as he jumped in and took the lines from her hands.

She flashed a smile at him. "Yes, a trunk and two handbags. And oh, Horace, they were the wife and children of the man to whom Mr. Delavan gave his freedom last June! I do hope they'll get to him safely!"

He remained silent, as he usually did if she spoke in his presence of Delavan. So she turned at once to another subject.

"How did the party go off last night? I didn't see Charlotte when she came home, so I don't know anything about it yet. Did you have a good time?"

"The party? Oh, yes, it was pleasant. Everybody seemed to enjoy themselves."

She cast a side glance at him. He was looking fixedly ahead and his expression seemed to indicate lack of interest in the social function to which he had escorted Charlotte. She tried another tack:

"I spent the evening reading speeches. You've read George William Curtis's oration, haven't you?" He warmed up at this, with a look of relief, and they plunged at once into a discussion of the speech, comparing ideas upon it, and telling each other bits of news they had heard about its influence and about the progress of the campaign.

"When the state elections are held next week, in Ohio, Indiana and Pennsylvania," said Hardaker, "we'll have a good indication of how things will go in November. The side that gets Pennsyl-

vania will be pretty sure to win. I hope we'll carry it, but between you and me, Rhoda, I don't like the look of things over there. They're stealing our thunder. They're yelling "Buck and Breck and Free Kansas" all over the state. And Kansas has about as much chance of becoming free if Buchanan is elected as—Prince has of flying."

"Has Julia said anything in her letters to you about John Brown and what the free-state people in Kansas think about him? You know the others accuse him of most awful murders."

"War is always murder, and it doesn't pretend to be anything else," he responded with energy. "The Buchaneers have been doing some atrocious lying about him and about everything else out there. According to them it's war when the border ruffians drive the free-state settlers out of their homes and murder when Brown or anybody else helps to defend the settlers from their attacks. No, Julia hasn't said anything particular about him, but my opinion is that at the greatest risk to his own life he's helping to save Kansas from the grip of the slave power."

"Father believes in him," said Rhoda thoughtfully. "He knew John Brown here in Ohio, before he went to Kansas and he says there is nobody more devoted to the anti-slavery cause, or more enthusiastic and unselfish. Charlotte was trying to argue with me yesterday and telling me a lot of

stuff she had got from Billy Saunders about him. But I never take Charlotte seriously."

"Charlotte is very different from you," said Hardaker, gloomily.

"She's different from all of us, except that I think she must be like what mother was at her age, only more—more of a mischief. The truth is, Charlotte is dreadfully spoiled. We all spoil her, and no matter what she does we laugh and say, 'O, it's just Charlotte!'—except mother, and mother takes her too seriously, and that just makes her try to be more provoking. She had it in for Billy last night. Did she make him wish he'd never been born?"

"She didn't stop with Billy!" Hardaker exclaimed, shutting his jaws with a snap.

His companion laughed. "Did she visit her displeasure on you too? She made a sort of half threat at supper about making you promise to vote for Buchanan. I wonder if she did!" Rhoda teased, her face rippling with smiles.

Horace looked full into her laughing face, then turned his eyes suddenly to the front. "Hang it all, Rhoda," he broke out, "I must tell you about it, though I'm afraid you'll despise me afterward. The truth is,—I suppose—I'm engaged to Charlotte!"

"What! You!" she ejaculated, her eyes wide with amazement.

"Yes—I suppose so—something of the sort.



Anyway, I made love to her"—his face was a deep rose color and his eyes downcast—"pretty violent love, I guess—at least I felt that way—and—well, the upshot was that I suppose Charlotte considers that we're engaged. Oh, I know what you'll think of me, but I can't help it now. I'll just stand up and take my medicine."

As Rhoda listened, varying expressions flitted across her face. Once, when Hardaker stole a sidewise glance at her he saw there the stern look her father wore when deeply displeased, and his heart sank. But he went on stoutly. As he finished her lips were twitching, then the corners of her mouth went up, and she laughed aloud. At the sound of her merriment he looked relieved, and laughed a little too, though in a shamefaced way.

"Forgive me, Horace!" Rhoda gasped. "Don't think me unsympathetic—but it was so like Charlotte!" And she broke into another peal of laughter.

"I don't quite know what made me do it!" he pursued. "Charlotte is a pretty girl, and good company, and I like her well enough, but—you'll excuse me, Rhoda—I don't exactly approve of her, and heaven knows I don't want to marry her. That is, I don't this morning, in cold blood. Last night—well, last night, I felt different."

"Exactly!" agreed Rhoda. "I understand. Charlotte usually can make a man 'feel different'

when she tries. And I guess she must have tried real hard last night!"

"But that's no excuse for me acting the fool," Hardaker responded gloomily. "And that's just what I did, Rhoda—egregious fool, consummate fool, and every other kind of a fool you can think of. Do you think she'll want to hold me to it?"

Rhoda smiled and shook her head. "No, Horace, I don't. At least, not for very long. She was probably flirting with you just to add to Billy's punishment. All she'll want will be to get her own little fun out of it."

Hardaker brightened up. "She—she wouldn't let me kiss her! So I reckon she wasn't in earnest."

Rhoda laughed again. "Don't feel worried about it any more, Horace! It will all blow over in a week."

He looked at her gratefully. As she met his eyes she saw more in them than gratitude. "Rhoda, you're the best girl out! I wish—"

She checked him with a warning hand. "Never mind about that, Horace. Just start Prince up a little faster, for I must get home."

At that moment they came out upon the top of the hill. Below them lay the town, its bowering foliage dashed here and there, like an artist's palette, with splotches of brilliant color. Winding between hills and fields, the noble river flashed back the morning sun. Involuntarily Hardaker checked the horse, exclaiming, as two river packets

came sweeping around a bend below the town. One of them was three or four lengths ahead of the other.

"They're racing, Rhoda! Just look at their speed!"

"Oh, Horace! See the flames coming out of their smoke stacks!"

"I reckon the firemen are just shoveling in the resin, along with the coal, this time!"

"The one ahead is the 'Ohio Beauty,' isn't she?"

"Yes, and the other's the 'Northern Belle.' Those two race every chance they get. The 'Belle' is trying to get ahead and beat the 'Beauty' to the landing, so as to capture all this morning's business. Look, Rhoda! You can see them turning on the hose around the smoke stacks, to keep the decks from taking fire!"

Both the steamboats were tooting their whistles and ringing their bells, the shrill sounds of the one eased a little by the sweet notes of the other. Across the clamor broke faintly the music of the bands stationed on their decks. Horace and Rhoda could see the people on each boat waving hats and handkerchiefs at the other.

"See the 'Belle' spurt ahead! She'll get there first yet if the 'Beauty' can't get up a little more steam!"

"And she is! Oh, Horace, see how the flames are pouring from her chimneys!"

Then, suddenly, the "Beauty" seemed to leap from the water, there was a low, booming roar, and out of a burst of flames and smoke her fragments were scattered upon the bosom of the river.

For one instant the two watchers upon the hill-top sat stunned and breathless. Then, "My God!" muttered Hardaker as he leaned to urge the horse forward.

"Hurry, Horace!" cried Rhoda. "We must get father,—he'll want to go at once!"

They dashed down the hill at a gallop, and up the other side, and drew in at the Ware gate to find the doctor, his razor in one hand and his face covered with lather, trying to see from the veranda what had happened.

They called to him, "A steamboat explosion!" and he rushed back into his office, to reappear in a moment with his surgical case and medicine bag, wiping the lather from his face with his handkerchief.

A swarm of rowboats was already picking up survivors from the water, and the "Northern Belle," sure now of all the traffic there would be that morning, slowed down and stood by until her decks were crowded with the wounded, burnt, or half-drowned sufferers.

Dr. Ware found a rowboat to take him out to the Belle, still waiting in mid-stream. "Come with me, Rhoda," he said. "You can help."

When the girl cast her eyes over the deck, as

she stepped on board, she shrank back, appalled and sickened by the ghastly sight. But with a tightening of the lips she drew herself together and went to work. Presently, as she was trying to quiet an hysterical woman, her father came close and drew her aside.

"Rhoda," he said in a low voice, "Jeff Delavan has just been brought on board." She turned pale and swayed toward him and he grasped her arm. "Steady, girl," he encouraged. "He's alive, but unconscious. As far as I can see now I don't think he is seriously injured. Your mother would probably want him taken to our house."

She straightened, with a quick grip upon herself. "Yes, father, of course she would—and I, too. Oh, he shall go nowhere else!"

## CHAPTER X

So it happened that when Jefferson Delavan came back to consciousness Mrs. Ware was bending over him, extreme anxiety in her look. Dr. Ware had found that his manifest injuries consisted in a broken rib and some burns upon his arms. But an accidental blow while clinging to a plank in the water had rendered him unconscious and he had been rescued barely in time to prevent him from slipping off and sinking to his death. Over the possible results of this blow the physician was anxious. Everything would depend, he had told his wife and Rhoda, upon how the young man came out of the oblivion. He had warned them that it might be with wandering wits, and in that case only time could tell how severe, possibly even how permanent, would be the results of the accident.

Delavan stirred and moaned slightly and Mrs. Ware, bending over him with her fingers upon his pulse, saw that his eyelids fluttered. "Rhoda!" she called, her voice a-tremble and sinking to a whisper, "he's coming to!" Rhoda, leaning across the foot of the bed upon her clenched hands, was watching his face with intent eyes.

"Come and stand beside me!" her mother went

on with quivering lips. "If he shouldn't know me I—I can't stand it!" Rhoda took his wrist from her shaking hand, pressed firm fingers upon his pulse and threw her other arm with a little soothing caress around the elder woman's shoulders. Suddenly the patient's eyes flew open and with a bewildered stare looked up into Mrs. Ware's pale and anxious face.

"Jeff, dear boy, don't you know me?" she begged. His blank, unrecognizing gaze rested upon her for a silent minute, then wandered on and fell upon her companion.

"Speak to him, dear," Mrs. Ware whispered brokenly. But there was no need. Slowly a puzzled expression crept into the vacuity, and that presently gave way to one of recognition, and then the hearts of the two women were stirred to their depths by the glad wonder that illumined his countenance. Never would Rhoda be able to forget that look, like the sudden happiness overspreading the face of a child at unexpected sight of a loved one, which her presence had inspired—her presence, which had brought back his sense, trembling upon the verge of that unknown black gulf, into the world of light and reason.

"Rhoda!" he said feebly, and then, smiling, closed his eyes again.

"Stay here beside him," Mrs. Ware whispered, "while I go and see if your father has returned. Oh, honey! I think it's going to be all right!"

When she came back with Dr. Ware, half an hour later, she slipped quietly into the room a few steps ahead of her husband and found Rhoda telling her patient what had happened, while he listened, with her hand clasped in his. Her motherly heart gave a quick throb. "It has brought Rhoda to her senses too, at last!" was her quick inference. But a moment later doubts disturbed her certainty as she saw the unconcern with which the girl withdrew her hand and made way for her father.

Dr. Ware was well pleased with the young man's condition. "You'll have to stay in bed a few days, perhaps a week," was his decision, "while your broken rib is knitting itself together again. You've got a pretty good case of nervous shock also, as the result of that blow on your head—and you can thank God, Mr. Delavan, that it's nothing worse than shock. But a few days of quiet will make that all right too."

There was no perturbation in the physician's mind, at first, over the presence of Jefferson Delavan in his house, invested though the young man was with the romantic interest of his narrow escape from death. He felt sure of his daughter now and did not believe there was any danger of her marrying the southerner. She had thrown herself unreservedly into sympathy with the anti-slavery cause and she was working with him enthusiastically and efficiently in making of their house a "station" on the Underground Railroad.



"No," he assured himself, "she won't go back on her convictions now. She's decided what's right for her to do, and she'll stick to it like a soldier." He smiled with pride, but a moment later his thought supplemented, with softened feeling, "It will be hard on her, though!"

On the whole, feeling thus sure about Rhoda, he was rather glad to have the young man there, because of the pleasure it would give his wife to mother him and to recall the memories of her youth. In Dr. Ware's feeling toward his wife there was a strong element of compassion. In serious middle age, considering the past with judicial mind, he doubted not a little if, in that wildly impelling time of youthful passion, it had been quite the fair thing for him to marry her and take her away from all her girlish associations. He knew well enough that she had loved him then and that she still loved him and that their life together had been as calmly happy as imperfect mortals have any right to expect the wedded state to be.

But he also felt quite sure that if he had not paid impetuous court to her in those vivid youthful days she would have loved and married some man of her own region and lived her life surrounded by the conditions and the people with whom she was most in sympathy. His conviction that she would have been happier in such estate inspired him with a very great tenderness toward

her, and with a half-realized wish to make atonement, in such little ways as became possible, for what she had missed.

She had been loyal to him through all these years, and from the start had refused to go back to her old home for even a short visit, because the invitations from her family had never included him. That one stay at Fairmount, with Jeff Delavan's mother, had been the only return to the old life which she had ever allowed herself. So now he was pleased when he foresaw how much comfort she would find in having "Adeline's boy" under her roof and needing her ministrations.

But Mrs. Ware had still another reason to be pleased that Jeff Delavan was to be a member of their household for several days and under such conditions. She warmly hoped and therefore almost believed that Rhoda's determination would go down under the persuasive influence of daily association with her lover. The girl was a good nurse, She had considerable knowledge, acquired from her father, of what ought to be done in a sick room and she was one of those people with a native knack for making an invalid comfortable. Therefore, Mrs. Ware argued, it would be her duty to take main charge of their bedridden guest, and Rhoda would do it if she could be made to see that it was her duty,

There was nothing so sure to soften a girl's heart, she told herself, as seeing a strong man

dependent upon her care. And this combined with Jeff's masterful love-making and the pleadings of her own heart—could there be a better combination? Truly, it was almost providential, Jeff's being upon that boat.

She began at once to plan the household matters so that Rhoda would be free to devote the greater part of each day to the sick-room. She decided also that it was most necessary for the patient to be kept quiet, to be undisturbed by much going in and out of his room, and that therefore Charlotte, at least for several days, should not be admitted.

Charlotte keenly resented this order. She felt it to be most unfair that she, who would undoubtedly be to any young man the most entertaining member of the family, should be barred from a room so full of romantic interest as this, in which lay a good-looking young gentleman, who had barely been rescued from a tragic death but who doubtless would still be capable of good judgment in the matter of feminine attractions. When Rhoda found her at the piano practising "The Last Rose of Summer" in the late afternoon of that first day she was looking very glum.

"What's the matter, sister?" Rhoda queried.

"Nothing," Charlotte answered shortly.

"Really? I'd never think it!" Rhoda smiled at her, sitting down with a lapful of stockings to be sorted into goats-to-be-mended and sheep-not-

to-be-mended. "If I were going to guess, I'd say you were sleepy and needed to go to bed early. I heard you come in last night, and it was pretty late. You haven't told me a word yet about the party. Did you have a good time?"

Charlotte laughed and tinkled some notes upon the piano keys. "Yes, indeed! I haven't had such a perfectly lovely time in I don't know when!"

"That's good!" Rhoda smiled discreetly, her eyes upon her work. "And Billy—did he have a good time too?"

"Oh, Billy! Rhoda, you ought to have seen him! He was just furious! He looked as if he wouldn't want to speak to me for a month. But he will!"

"You haven't said anything about Horace. Did he enjoy the evening?"

Charlotte, with her eyes on Rhoda's face, opened her lips to make a merry answer, hesitated, then darted at her sister a searching glance.

"Rhoda," she exclaimed, "Horace has been telling you about it!"

"About what?" Rhoda looked up, the suspicion of a smile at the corners of her mouth.

"O, la! About *it*, I said, didn't I? Oh, Rhoda, it was such fun!" Charlotte's voice was suffused with laughter. "But it's nothing to make Horace propose. Why, Rhoda, you could do it!"

Rhoda laid her stockinged hand, in whose covering she was searching for possible holes, in her lap and turned serious eyes upon Charlotte's face, alight with merriment. "Do you really think so, sister? But, then, I don't think I should want him to."

Charlotte looked at her in surprise. "You wouldn't, Rhoda? That's queer! But you are queer, anyway! The first thing we know you'll be wearing short hair and bloomers and going to woman's-rights conventions! But please don't, until after I'm married, anyway, so I won't belong to the family any more!"

"If you're going to marry Horace right away I shan't have to wait very long, shall I?"

"Who said I was going to marry Horace? Did he?"

"No. He said he—hoped you wouldn't!"

They both laughed and Charlotte went on, with a saucy toss of her head: "Oh, he did, did he! He ought to be punished for that! Rhoda, I'm going to tell him he's either got to keep his promises or vote for Buchanan! You know, I'm awfully fond of Horace"—her mouth drooped and her voice was plaintive—"but I'd be willing to give him up for the sake of a vote for Buck!"

"Poor Horace! You ought to be ashamed to tease him so!"

"Well, then, if you don't want him teased, I'll tell you what I'll do." She stooped to pluck

Bully Brooks, now verging fast upon the dignity of cathood, from the comfort of a nap upon a chair. "If you'll persuade mother to let me go in to see Jeff Delavan whenever I want to I'll let Horace off. But if you don't he'll have to either marry me or vote for my side. Won't he, Bully Brooks?"

The response of the kitten was of such emphatic sort that she boxed its ears and threw it to the floor. "The kitten's getting too big to be teased," Rhoda commented quietly.

"Well, Horace isn't!" she responded saucily and went whistling from the room.

## CHAPTER XI

"No, mother, I don't think I ought to do it."

"Why, Rhoda, what a curious idea! It seems to me to be plainly your duty. Jeff is so much quieter and more contented when you are in the room."

"But it doesn't seem quite right to me to stay there so much when I'm not going to marry him. I know he—still loves me and if I spend so much time with him he'll think I'm just leading him on to make him ask me again."

Mrs. Ware smiled at her daughter and fondly patted her arm. "My little Puritan girl! No, honey, Jeff is a gentleman and he won't think anything of the sort. It's very wrong of you to let such silly scruples hinder his recovery. Just think how fortunate it was that you were there when he came to himself yesterday! Why, Rhoda, I told your father it was just as if the sight of you fairly pulled him into his right senses. And now he's nervous and fretful if you stay out of the room very long, as you did this afternoon. That's bad for him, Rhoda, you know it is. He needs to be kept contented and happy."

Rhoda turned to the window and looked thoughtfully out. They were in her mother's

bedchamber, on the western side of the house. The sun was sinking into a royal couch of red and gray and gold, amber and pink and purple. Its level red rays fell upon the arbor and touched the withering leaves with delicate, evanescent tints. Her thoughts went back to that June night and she seemed to sense again the fragrance of the white petunias and to feel that prescience of fate awaiting her in its heavy shadows. And then with a rush that set her heart to beating faster came the thrilling memory of love words and the knowledge that had been born in her breast. Mrs. Ware noted the direction of her eyes and saw the quickening of the faint rose-bloom in her cheeks. She guessed what was in her daughter's mind, smiled, and kept silent.

That there was truth in what her mother said about her influence in the sick-room Rhoda was well aware. She had herself noted their patient's increased nervousness if she stayed long away from his presence, and she treasured the thought of it in her heart as she did his open words of love. And she longed, far more than even her mother could guess, to be there with him, to minister to his comfort, to hear his voice, to catch now and then the look of love in his eye. So much did she yearn for all the blessedness of it that she was afraid to trust herself, afraid for her resolution.

She turned her eyes away from the grape arbor and deliberately fixed her thoughts upon the slave



woman and her two little children whom she had succored two nights before, forced herself to think of the dozen others whom she had helped to conceal in the house and to further secretly on their way, of the desperate, fleeing bondman whose freedom she had won from Jefferson Delavan in the woods on that June afternoon.

With a sudden indrawing of her breath she set her teeth upon her lip and said within herself, "No, no, I will not fail you!"

But the dear thought of her lover and his need of her still drew her heart. Well, she would tell him there must be no more of love between them and that only upon that understanding would she stay beside him in his sick-chamber. Then he could have no false hopes and the way before them would be fair and clear. At this capitulation she was conscious of a thrill of happiness and she could not resist dwelling for an instant upon a sweet premonition of their hours together. Just then she saw Charlotte down in the yard and her sister's proposal of the day before recurred to her, as it had already done several times. She knew there was no telling how far Charlotte might choose to carry her teasing of Horace Hardaker.

"Poor Horace! It's a shame!" was her thought, but a smile went with it. "Such a good friend as he is, and he does take things so much in earnest!" Why shouldn't Charlotte go in and out of the room as freely as she did? The idea

brought a sharp pang with it—Charlotte had such a way with her, and if she chose—well, what right had she herself to Jeff's love when she would not marry him? What a mean thing it would be to stand in her sister's way if Jeff should choose to transfer his affections. Something seemed clutching at her heart, but she turned quickly round to her mother, who had been waiting with a pleased smile on her face, scarcely doubting what would be the result of her daughter's few minutes of thought.

But Mrs. Ware had not yet learned, although Rhoda had been giving her constant proof of it for more than twenty years, how different were their viewpoints, their modes of thought, the results toward which their temperaments bade them aim. Rhoda was always surprising and disappointing her, and yet she had such faith in Rhoda's good sense that she could never believe, beforehand, that the girl would fail to see things just as they appeared to her. And one such surprise was even now awaiting her.

"Maybe you're right, mother, and I'll do as you like about it, only it seems to me that Charlotte ought to go into the room as much as I do."

Mrs. Ware looked at her daughter in blank surprise. "Charlotte! Why, Rhoda, that would be the greatest mistake! You know how trying Charlotte is, and Jeff needs rest and quiet!"

"His nervousness won't last long, and it will be

good for him to have some one there as lively and entertaining as Charlotte is. It doesn't look right, mother, it isn't quite nice, when there are two of us, to allow only one to go inside his room. I'll be chief nurse if you want me to," and she flashed her sudden smile upon her mother, "but I want Charlotte for my assistant."

And finally, with many misgivings and much inward wondering why Rhoda did not know better than to give Charlotte such an advantage, Mrs. Ware gave up her determination. And Charlotte, her eyes sparkling over the triumph she had gained and her cheeks glowing with pleased excitement, helped Rhoda to take in the invalid's supper.

The next day they were both in Jeff's room, Rhoda with some sewing at which she worked while all three talked and jested together. But Charlotte was making much pretense of putting things to rights. She was of small stature, like her mother, and had a dainty figure, supple and well rounded. It showed to best advantage when she flitted about, as she was doing then, with quick, graceful movements, her body seeming to take unconsciously just the right poses and her arms and neck and head to move as if with some pleasing rhythm. Rhoda, who was tall and inclined to thinness and had long arms, knew with inward bitterness that when she moved about a room it was with no such pleasing effect. As she

glanced now and then at Charlotte she could not keep a touch of envy out of the admiration with which she regarded her sister.

Charlotte noted her side glances, made instant inference as to their cause, and at once became busier than ever. She had a way of tilting her hoopskirts as she walked, of which her mother had voiced frequent disapproval, so that with every step they showed her feet and ankles, and seemed to emphasize the grace and daintiness of her figure, with whose movements they swayed in harmony. The accomplishment had cost her a deal of practice before her mirror, and she usually reserved its exercise for occasions when she wished to be especially provoking. But she began it now, although her mother was not present, and tilted back and forth across the big room, tossing every now and then to Jeff Delavan a smile, a saucy look, a laugh, or a gay rejoinder. His eyes followed her and he joined in her gaiety with evident entertainment. A dull, pained foreboding began to creep into Rhoda's heart, but she said firmly to herself, "It's all right, whatever happens, for if I won't marry him I've no right to try to keep his love," and held it down and laughed and talked with them.

After a little Mrs. Ware came in for her morning call upon her "dear boy" and when she left the room she summoned Charlotte to go down the hill upon an errand for her. As the door closed

upon them Delavan turned to Rhoda with a smile.

"What a spoiled child that little sister of yours is!" he said. "I rather think she needs a lesson, and some of these days she's bound to get it. It's to be hoped," and his voice became gentler, "that it won't be too hard on her."

"Well, I've an idea," Rhoda replied, "that Charlotte would be pretty well able to take care of herself and would be likely to give back a better lesson than she got!"

He gazed at her a moment in silence, and she, seeing the look that was coming into his eyes, turned her attention to her sewing and tried not to feel the trembling in her bosom and the warming of her cheeks. "How loyal you are, Rhoda," he said presently, "except to your own heart—and to me!"

"Don't, Jeff! Please don't say those things to me any more! I mustn't listen to them, no matter how much I'd like to, for I'm not going to marry you—you know that. Give it all up, Jeff, and let's see if we can't be just good friends!"

"No," he broke in, "I shall not give it up, as long as I can see and hear in your eyes and your voice that you love me! You've no right, Rhoda, to deny your heart and mine like this!"

"Oh, Jeff, I've gone over that, and over and over it, so many times with myself, and there's only one right way, the way my conscience points

out to me! I can't marry you, Jeff, I can't, and that's all there is about it! It's only painful to us both to talk about it, so please don't do it again! We enjoy each other's society so much, both of us, so let's just have what comfort we can out of being together while you're here, and not spoil it by talking about what can't be!"

"It's because we love each other, dear heart, that we like being together! Oh, Rhoda, if you'd only admit—"

She bent toward him with her sudden, flashing smile, that he had come to know as the signal of some equally sudden and unexpected face-about in her thought, and he stopped, expectant.

"I do admit it, Jeff!" came to him demurely in the wake of the smile.

"Rhoda!" he cried, and his whole being tried to leap toward her. But he had no more than lifted his head from the pillow than she sprang up with a cry of alarm, her hand thrust out to hold him back.

"Jeff, you musn't!" she exclaimed, her face suddenly serious again and her voice all anxiety. "You'll break that rib over again if you don't lie still, and father says it's knitting together so nicely!"

In her alarm she had put one hand against his chest to push him back upon his pillow. Quickly his hand imprisoned it and held it against his heart. For a moment neither spoke and as she

bent above him feeling his heart throb beneath her hand, looking down into his eyes and seeing love and longing there, response crept into her own and a warmer color into her cheeks. Unconsciously she bent nearer, swayed toward him, and he threw up both arms, sure that they would enclose her in the embrace for which they were longing. But realization flashed upon her and she sprang back. He held his empty arms toward her for a moment, then let them fall upon the bed. She could not bear the look upon his face and sank down into her chair, her own hidden in her hands.

Presently she began gathering up her sewing, scattered upon the floor. "Rhoda," he said humbly, "I beg your pardon!"

She would not meet his eyes, but kept her own steadily upon her sewing, as she neatly folded it together. "It wasn't your fault any more than mine," she answered in subdued accents, "but it mustn't happen again, or I shall have to stay out of here entirely. I must go now. Father is usually home by this time, and I always go to his office when he comes to see if he needs me for anything."

"But you'll come back, dear, as soon as you can? And you'll forgive me?" he begged.

"Yes, I'll come back, when I can, but I'll be busy now, for a while. And I'll forgive you—if you'll forgive me!" She smiled at him, not the

radiant flash which he loved, but just a tender curving of the lips which sent no merry light up into her serious eyes.

"Rhoda! What a dear girl you are! Forgive you! You'll come back soon?"

"As soon as I can." She turned at the door, still smiling gently, and held up at him a warning finger. "But you must promise not to talk about love!"

"All right, Rhoda. If you won't stay away long, I'll promise—for next time!"

Outside the door a trembling seized her and she leaned against the wall. "I didn't give up," she told herself, "I didn't, that time. But could I—again?"

She went into her own room and knelt beside the window, whence, a few nights before she had seen the mulatto refugee and her babies come trudging up the street. Vividly the picture came before her mind and with it once more the thought of all that such a flight must mean to a woman, alone and in the dark, with two helpless children, herself almost as helpless as they. She bowed her head upon the window sill and whispered: "O God! Dear God in heaven, give me strength to keep myself away from that accursed thing! Save me from my own heart, which tempts me so, and keep me, O God, keep me from giving up!"

When she rose from her knees, she did not go at once downstairs, but moved about the room,



doing little things that did not need to be done, straightening a pillow on the bed, moving a chair, raising the window shade, then lowering it again, rearranging the things on her bureau. And at last, irresolutely, she opened a drawer and took out the little box tied with white ribbon. She held the withered rose in her palm, kissed it, and said softly, "Good-by, dear love, good-by."

Perhaps she believed at that moment that she would never again allow herself to caress and to brood over this little symbol of her love, that she would never again give up to her heart even in a privacy where none but herself could know that she had yielded. But she carefully put the box away again in the same hiding place, which she knew so well that her hand could go straight thither with her eyes shut. For her years numbered but two and twenty and they had fallen from her along an easy path, marked as yet by struggles too few to have taught her that God helps only him who helps himself to the uttermost, and that perhaps far more of God is in his own strivings than in the distant heaven to which he prays.

On the stairway she met her father. "I've been looking for you, Rhoda," he said. "Come into the office." There he carefully shut the doors, after a hurried glance round about. "I've just had a letter," he went on in a lowered voice,

“from Alexander Wilson. You remember him, don’t you?”

“Yes, father. The young Canadian who was here a month or so ago, to study the Underground Road, and went on south to stir up the slaves. Did I tell you that the woman I took to Gilbertson’s the other night had been started by him?”

“No! Was she? He’s doing a good work down there, at tremendous risks, too! If they find out what he’s up to it will mean tarring and feathering, and lynching afterward, and all of it on the spot. He’s a brave fellow, Rhoda! Where did he send this woman from?”

Rhoda colored. In the excitement and the unusual press of duties that followed the steamboat explosion there had been little time for private talk with her father and beyond the bare information that the three refugees had been there and that she had taken them on she had told him nothing of the incidents of that night. It had come about that she shrank from saying anything about Delavan’s being a slaveholder, especially to her father. It seemed to her a moral obliquity which her love instinctively yearned to hide from others. But there was only a moment’s hesitation before her earnest eyes met his frankly.

“She came from Jeff’s plantation, and she is the wife of the man, Andrew, to whom Jeff gave his freedom last summer—you remember? Mr. Wilson saw him in Canada and he sent word and

some money to his wife for her to follow him. She said Mr. Wilson got eleven slaves together, from different plantations, and started them all off on the same night. The rest went by other routes,—mostly, I think, through Philadelphia. She wanted to come the same way her husband had taken. Wasn't it brave of her, father, to start off alone with those two little children, without knowing a thing about how or where to go, except just as she is told, from one station to the next! She seemed so passive and so trustful! I haven't felt so sorry for any of the others that we've helped as I did for her!"

In Dr. Ware's heart some uneasiness had begun to make itself manifest lest the presence of the young man in that room upstairs might yet influence his daughter more than he wished. Perhaps he craved reassurance that she did not regret her decision. Perhaps also unspoken sympathy with the struggle between her conscience and her heart moved him as he asked:

"You do not regret, do you, Rhoda, that you went into this work?"

She looked at him in some surprise and met his gray, calm eyes bent upon her with something more like wistfulness in their expression than she had ever seen in them before.

"No, father, I do not. I am very glad." There was no mistaking the truth of her quiet tones. But the next instant her lip began to

tremble. By sheer force of will she held it firm, closely pressed against the other, and fought down the lump that was rising in her throat. That look in her father's eyes had made her long to throw herself upon his breast, and sobbing her heart out there tell him how hard the struggle had become. Surely he would sympathize and give her comfort and strength. For an instant the vision came back of him and her mother, in their passionate youth, galloping, galloping, on that wild ride to their heart's rest—oh, surely he would understand both sides of her trouble! But the habit of years was strong upon them both, and they sat in silence for a moment longer, while Rhoda battled down her emotion and her father looked through a bunch of letters he had taken from his breast pocket. It was she who spoke first.

"You said you had a letter from Mr. Wilson, father. Was it about that you wanted to see me?"

"Yes. Here it is. He writes from Vicksburg: "DEAR FRIEND WARE: On this same date I am forwarding to you six copies of "The Burning Question," three bound in black and three in tan. If there have been any changes as to handlers and forwarders since I was in your neighborhood can you send some one to the south side of the river to watch out for them and see that they do not fall into too appreciative hands? They are billed to go in the usual way and ought to be

on hand within a week after this letter reaches you.’”

He put the letter away and looked at her anxiously. “Can we take care of them, Rhoda?”

“Oh, we must, father! We must manage to do it in some way!” She bent forward, looking at him intently, and into her face crept the expression he was beginning to see there whenever they talked or planned or worked together upon this matter, a strained, eager look, with something in it of exaltation.

“Walter Kimball and his brother Lewis would probably be able to go across and keep watch for them,” he began.

“Yes,” she broke in, “and one of them could hurry back and let Horace know, as soon as they get there, and then go over again and help the other row them across, and Horace could rush up here and tell us, so that we could be ready for them. It will be difficult to hide so many,” she ended doubtfully.

“The boys must arrange to get them here in the night and then we can manage it. I’ll get word to Chaddle Wallace to be in the neighborhood with his peddler’s wagon and he can take four of them in that. Perhaps one of the Kimball boys can drive two in our carriage.”

“Or I can, if you want me to. I’ll see that Lizzie has plenty of things cooked ready for their supper. Oh, it will go off all right, father, and

we won't need to keep them here more than an hour!"

"We'll have to make some different arrangement now that winter will soon be here," he said thoughtfully. "We'll have to contrive some sort of hiding-place in the house or the barn, so that we can keep them over night if necessary."

"I've been wondering, father, if a sort of little room couldn't be hidden in the woodshed, with the wood piled around it close."

"Yes, that could be done," he nodded slowly, "and it would be a pretty safe place. The slave chasers would hardly think of investigating an innocent-looking woodpile. That's a good suggestion, Rhoda, and I'll have it done, and the winter's wood stacked all around it. Marshal Hanscomb has got a pretty keen nose and I think he's suspicious about me anyway, just because of my sentiments. But I reckon that would be too much for Hanscomb!"

He smiled at his daughter with quiet exultation in his manner and she smiled back at him proudly and said it surely would.

"Your mother wants to make a trip down to Cincinnati soon and Charlotte, of course, would be glad to go with her." A trace of embarrassment suddenly appeared in his manner and, as if to conceal or to distract himself from some disconcerting thought, he began looking over and sorting the letters and papers on his desk. "I'll


have this done while she's gone," he added abruptly.

Rhoda rose, feeling dismissal in the sudden change in her father's manner and went slowly toward the door. She felt what was in his mind. It had brought discomfort into her own thought, and more than once she had wondered if she might not speak to him about it. But unwillingness even to seem to question his attitude in a matter so peculiarly intimate between him and her mother had held her back. Now she knew that it was in his mind as well as in hers and she felt that it would grow and become an embarrassment between them. For herself it was already a stumbling block whose importance seemed graver with every episode of her work in the Underground. Why not meet it at once and get the question settled?

She stopped with her hand on the door knob and looked back. To her surprise his eyes were following her, those calm, clear, cool eyes that in her mind were a sort of embodiment of her father. They seemed to sum up and express his whole character and temperament. She could never think of him without seeing his gray eyes looking at her, kind, but dispassionate and judicial.

"What is it, Rhoda?" he asked.

She came slowly back, looking down, and conscious that there must be something almost like shamefacedness in her manner.



"I was wondering, father—is it necessary—do you think—must we keep it from mother always? Charlotte—it's just as well—and that's no matter—but mother—" She stopped, confused, and fingered the chair-back beside which she stood. Her eyes were upon it or she might have seen a slight flush color his usually pale skin. There was a moment's silence before he spoke.

"Don't misunderstand me about that, daughter," he said gently. He did not often address her except by her name and when he did sometimes call her "daughter" or "child" it stirred in her a shy warmth toward him and awoke a half-realized impulse to cling to his hand or stroke his hair. The impulse always died away in self-consciousness, but the warmth remained in her heart and made her glad.

"If I don't take your mother into my confidence about this it is because I want to spare her any worry or embarrassment or divided feeling that it might cause her. Don't think for a minute," and his tones were earnest, "that I don't think she would be loyal. I know well enough how true to my interests she would be. But, do you understand, it might grieve her, or give her some uneasiness, or even pain, if she knew what we are doing. Her sympathies are all on the other side. But I must do this work. It isn't much, but it will help, and it seems to me the best that is possible for me. But I want to do it, if I can, with-



out adding—without giving her any discomfort. I'm glad you spoke about it, Rhoda, for I wanted you to understand."

"Thank you, father. I understand how you feel, but—" she had reached the door again, "but, I wish it didn't have to be so. I wish we could tell her."

"So do I, daughter." She looked back, surprised at the unusual sadness in his voice, and saw him sitting at his desk, his head on one hand and his eyes on the floor. The sight of him thus smote her heart. She hesitated an instant, then went out softly and left him alone.

## CHAPTER XII

Mid-October came, and the day of local elections in three of the northern states. The whole country was waiting on the tiptoe of expectancy for the result. Pennsylvania was the keystone of the situation. The party that would win the presidential contest would have to have her twenty-seven electoral votes, and this state poll was looked upon as a sure indication of how the commonwealth would go three weeks later. It was everywhere admitted that the issue would be close. Sectional and party feeling and consequent excitement ran so high and hot that there were dark forebodings of what might happen. All men knew that they walked upon a thin crust over volcanic fires that might burst through at any moment, upon any pretext.

The Republican party was surprising itself and the entire country by its showing of remarkable strength and its brilliant prospects of success. From the South were coming threats of disunion louder and more frequent and more positive. In many of the slave states there was already the stir of endeavor to agree upon concerted action in case Frémont should be elected. Through the north the Democratic and the Whig parties made

much of these portents as showing the danger Republican success would mean to the united country. But the Republican leaders, jubilant over the proofs of their strength which the campaign had developed, and secretly recognizing the weight of this argument, made light of both it and the southern threats.

And so the whole country waited in breathless anxiety on that cold and drizzling October day, with its attention centered on tumultuous Philadelphia, both sides fearing defeat, both sides hoping for victory, and all dreading the spark with which some chance word or untoward accident might kindle the smoldering passions in that city into flames that would quickly involve the whole nation.

Rhoda moved restlessly about the house, showing little interest in her usual duties and disregarding her mother's hints that she was neglecting their invalid guest. Delavan had almost recovered from his injuries and in a few days would return home. Mrs. Ware was sorely disappointed that his presence in the house had not affected her daughter's determination. She began to feel sure that it must be her husband's influence over Rhoda that balked all her own efforts and nullified the effect of the constant association from which she had hoped so much.

Jeff asked her advice that morning and they talked the matter over intimately. She promised

him once more the full measure of her influence with Rhoda. "I'm afraid it isn't much," she said, a little tremulously. "But I'll do my best, Jeff."

"I thank you, Mrs. Ware, madam, and I assure you I shall not go away without trying again to win her consent."

"You and little Emmy used to call me 'Aunt Emily,' when I was at Fairmount," she said with a suggestion of reproof, half motherly, half coquettish, if the chastened ghost of a manner that sometimes remembered its alluring youth might still be called coquettish.

"It is the dearest wish of my heart to call you 'mother,' some day," he answered, kissing her hand.

"And of mine to hear you call me so," she added, bending over and touching her lips to his forehead. Then they fell to talking of his mother and she was deeply interested in the many little things Jeff remembered of her life at Fairmount. He recalled that she had always shown concern for the welfare of the slaves and had given training in their duties and deportment to the housemaids and had allowed them and also the men who served about the house and gardens to acquire a little education if they wanted it.

"You must tell Rhoda about that," Mrs. Ware exclaimed. "Let her see that there is some virtue in slaveholders. It's just her notion about slavery be-

ing wrong that keeps you apart, Jeff. If you could only convince her that there is as much right in it as there is in anything in this world, where nothing is all right, I believe she'd give up. I've tried to, but she seems to think I don't know enough about it, in general, for what I say to have any influence. Talk to her about it, Jeff, and make her see plainly how we of the South feel about it. You know how necessary slave labor is to the South, and all that side of it. She has heard only the things the abolitionists say, here in the North, and she's all taken up with that. But you can give her the other side, as a southern man with one of the best and kindest of hearts, who has studied the question thoroughly. If you can only convince her that slavery is right, dear boy, or even best for the niggers, as we know it is, you'll win the day—and make me almost as happy as you will Rhoda, or yourself!"

"It is good advice, madam, and I shall follow it. I have begun to understand that I must win Rhoda's head before she will give up her heart. But I shall win them both, and call you 'mother' yet!"

"Heaven grant it, dear boy, for you were made for each other, you and my dear girl!"

She rose to take her leave, but Charlotte came with fresh medicines for the invalid and bustled about the room preparing his draughts. Mrs. Ware, with an eye upon her daughter's graceful

movements, sat down again and talked of ordinary affairs until she thought Charlotte had spent as much time there as was needful. Then she summoned that young lady to go with her and assist at certain rites in the kitchen.

But Rhoda would not visit the sick-chamber through all the forenoon. Why she was staying away she scarcely knew, except that she said to herself several times during the long hours of the morning, "He won't miss me if Charlotte's there." Jeff had obeyed her injunction that he must not speak of love, and during the last two days had kept careful curb upon his tongue and close watch upon the language of his eyes. And she missed more than she would admit to herself the outbreaks of those heretofore unruly members. She shared her father's suspense over the election that was going on and during the forenoon, whenever he was alone in his office, she went in to ask him if he had heard any news and to talk over the situation.

More than ever, this fall, he was making a companion of her and discussing with her as freely as he did with Horace Hardaker and his other anti-slavery friends, the plans and movements of the anti-slavery people, and the prospects of the Republican party. She was a good listener, rarely making comments unless she had something worth while to say, and usually he found what she did say clear-thoughted and sensible.

On this morning it was not only her interest in what was going on in Pennsylvania that sent her every now and again to seek her father's society. Of equal force was her desire to escape from the tormenting questions that filled her mind as to what Jeff was doing, whether Charlotte was with him, and whether or not he was wishing she were there. And so, between her political zeal and her love, she passed a restless, fruitless morning.

Her mother noted her frequent visits to her father's office and, coupling with these the fact that she had all the morning ignored Delavan's presence in the house, made instant inference. "It's Amos's influence over her," she told herself, resentment rising bitter in her heart. "He's urging her against it and spoiling my dear girl's life, just for the sake of his own whims! It's most selfish of him—and wicked. But I'll see what I can do!"

Knocking at Rhoda's bedroom door after dinner she found her daughter sitting at the eastern window, hands idly folded in her lap, and eyes upon the wooded hills, whose autumn colors glowed softly through the gray, dripping mist. It was so unusual to see her doing absolutely nothing that Mrs. Ware stared at her in blank surprise.

"Why, Rhoda, you look lonely sitting here all by yourself," she said briskly. "Why don't you go in and stay with Jeff for a while?"

"I don't know—I guess I don't feel like it," Rhoda responded, a forlorn note in her voice.

"Jeff has been asking for you, dear. In fact, he's fretting himself into a fever because you haven't even looked into the room all this morning. And you were there only a little while yesterday—"

"Twice, yesterday, mother."

"But such a little while each time. It isn't kind to leave the poor boy alone all day, on such a dreary day as this."

"But Charlotte—"

"No, I want Charlotte to help me to-day. It's time she was learning to do more things about the house. Put on your pink frock, honey, you look so pretty in that, and go in and cheer Jeff up for a while."

Rhoda did not answer, but looked out at the wet earth and the drizzling rain. Through her soul there surged such a forceful longing to follow her mother's advice that for a moment it seemed to arrest her powers of both action and speech.

"Don't sit here and mope any longer," her mother went on with tender cheerfulness, "and don't be so unkind to poor, sick Jeff. Come on, honey, I'll help you dress." And opening the wardrobe she took out the pink gown. Its wide skirt was covered with tiny flounces and when it was adjusted over a ruffled petticoat and her



largest hoopskirt, her slender waist and her head and shoulders rose out of its spreading folds as if they were emerging from a huge, many-petaled rose.

Jeff Delavan's face brightened as she floated into the room. He was dressed, for the first time since his accident, and sitting by the window.

"Rhoda! How good of you to come—and to wear that dress! You're like a ray of sunshine on this dark day! I've listened and hoped for you all day, and at last you're here! You're such a busy person, Rhoda, that I ought to feel fortunate to get even a little of your time. What have you been doing all the morning? All manner of things?"

"Yes,—no—that is—yes, I've been busy,—I always am, you know," she stammered, confused, remembering how idle her morning had been. "I've been with father part of the time," she went on, recovering her self-possession, "talking about the elections to-day."

"What do you care about the elections?" he demanded, in bantering gaiety.

She turned to him with proud gravity. "More than I do about anything else in the world."

Quickly his expression changed to one as serious as her own, and he began to speak of the situation in Pennsylvania and of his own belief in the success of the Democratic state ticket. She listened for a few sentences and then her heart began

to clamor for signs of love in his face and voice and words. She ignored the fact that she had forbidden all such manifestation and knew only that she wanted it and it was not there. All unknown to her, in his gladness at her coming her lover was having his own battle with himself to do her bidding, and was so fearful lest he should overstep the line she had drawn and lose her dear presence that he was plunging into this political discourse as the safest thing he could do.

She seemed to be paying close attention, but she heard only a word or a part of a sentence here and there. Instead, vague fears, half-realized doubts, uncertain questions filled her brain. Would she ever again see that look in his face? Did he ever look at Charlotte like that? Was his love for her all gone so soon? And then the spirit of the eternal feminine began to assert itself in her breast. She was, after all, her mother's daughter, and although the spirit of coquetry lay deep within her breast, so deep that only the call of truest love could bring it to the surface, yet it was there and it came now to do her heart's bidding.

It was all done instinctively, without conscious intention. But if her mother or sister could have looked through the wall they would have been surprised by the sight of a different Rhoda from the one they knew. This tender creature of coquettish graces and alluring smiles and eyelids

quickly lowered over ardent glances—was she the practical, efficient daughter of the house, upon whom they were both so dependent?

Delavan gazed at her, began to stumble over his sentences, confused the names of the people of whom he spoke, broke off for an instant, went back and started anew, then stopped abruptly in the middle of a sentence. "Rhoda Ware," he exclaimed in a low voice that shook with feeling.

At the sound of it Rhoda's little, half-conscious coquetries dropped from her instantly. It was a serious face that his gaze encountered as he surveyed her with dark eyes glowing and about his mouth the baffled but determined look that had become for her a sign of his strength—measure alike of his self-control and of his determination. She had seen it in every one of their struggles and it had seemed always to be saying to her, "You've conquered this time, but I shall win you yet!" She watched for it and loved it because it told her alike of her power over him and of his forceful masculine will, and perhaps also because deep down in her heart she half believed and almost hoped it would yet be stronger than her own resolution.

"Why do you insist upon keeping us apart?" he demanded, an imperious note in his voice. "You are doing a wicked thing. You've no right to starve both our hearts of the love that belongs to us, because of a mere whim!"

"Listen to me, Jeff, while I tell you the truth,

and then you won't want to marry me!" She was sitting straight and stiff, her face pale, and in it something of the same exaltation he had seen there on that June day in the arbor—the outward glow of the sacrificial fires she had lighted for the consuming of her love.

"You don't know what I am, Jeff! I am a nigger-thief and I am proud of it! I am stealing your slaves, anybody's slaves that want their freedom, and helping them to find their way to Canada, where they will be safe! Jefferson Delavan, of Fairmount, Kentucky, doesn't want to marry a woman who does that sort of thing and means to keep it up as long as there are slaves and she has power to help them!"

He looked at her a moment in silent amazement. "Rhoda, you don't realize the full significance of what you are saying, and doing!"

"If I could I would run off every slave from your plantations and send them all to Canada, where you could never touch one of them again. That is how much I realize it!"

A slow smile crept over his face while he regarded her with a look that was half surprise, half overleaping love, and was not without a touch of tender amusement. "But if you were to take away all my slaves, dear heart, you wouldn't do me nearly the harm that you are doing now by stealing yourself from me!"

Her serious eyes looked straight into his for a

moment in silence, and then her flashing smile broke over her face. "I won't ask you to put your words to the proof," she said in a quizzical tone.

He flushed a little. "I know what you mean," he answered tenderly, "and if there were no more in this matter than the mere question of having or not having slaves I would willingly free all that I own—ask Emily to divide the property and give their freedom to all the niggers that might fall to my share—for your sake, Rhoda, dear, for the sake of making you my wife. But the South needs slave labor—has got to have it in order to be prosperous—and I would be as untrue to my duty to my state and to my section if I were to do that as you think you would be to your conscience if you were to accept slavery."

She followed quickly upon his last word: "There can be no need of property or prosperity, as you call it, equal to the need, the right, of every human being to his freedom. When you make your comfort and wealth,—I mean all of you in the South,—of more importance than that first human right you are outraging one of God's laws, and God's curse will yet fall heavily upon you because of it."

"You speak in that way, Rhoda, because—pardon me—you really know nothing about economic conditions in the South. You are merely repeating the words of these abolition fanatics at the North, where the industrial conditions are such that slave

labor would not be profitable. If it were, there'd be a different tune sung north of Mason and Dixon's line!"

She shook her head at him. "You say that because you don't understand the feeling that is at the bottom of the anti-slavery movement. It places human rights above business profits."

"As to that, we of the South have our human rights and civil rights, too. We are trying to keep faith and you of the North are struggling to break it. You abolitionists forget the big share, the equal share, the southern states had in the making of this country, and you forget that they bore more than their share of the burden and loss of making it into a nation. There was more blood shed in South Carolina during the Revolution, Rhoda, than in Massachusetts, yes, more than in all New England. And now Massachusetts has the presumption, the insolence, to try to dictate to us how we shall order our affairs! We let her alone to work out her own destiny, and we demand the same right!"

"But we northerners see farther and see clearer into the way things are going than you can, because your eyes are blinded by what you believe to be your present interests. We want you to recognize the truth, that this nation was created to be a free country, that those who made it meant it to be the hope of the whole world, and it can

never, never, be that as long as you of the South insist upon making it half slave."

"You are quite mistaken, Rhoda, as to what they meant, or, rather, as to the way in which they meant it. When this nation was created North and South joined in sworn faith to a written contract. That contract recognized the rights of the south in its peculiar, its necessary, institution, and provided for their safeguarding. And now the North is trying to break that sworn faith, to force us out of our constitutional rights. It is not only our property but our honor that is at stake, and we should be craven indeed if we did not resent this combination of despotism and insult! Preston Brooks was right when he said the other day that if Frémont is elected the people of the South ought to march to Washington and seize the archives and the treasury of the government!"

She was leaning eagerly forward, her eyes shining, her lips parted, her face, paled by her excitement, vivid with the feeling that had swept her up into the regions where soul and body breathe the elixir of supreme conviction. But when she spoke, breaking in quickly upon his first pause, it was not only the fulness of her belief that thrilled in her low, tense tones. Their lower notes were sweet with the love that burned in her heart.

"Oh, Jeff, can't you see— Oh, I wish I could make you see that there can be no rights that are founded on wrong." She paused a moment, her

voice on a suspended accent, as she gathered her thoughts together. Delavan's eyes devoured the fair picture that she made and his heart leaped in response to those sweet notes in her voice. His mind was full of the ideas he had just uttered, tense with the conviction of their truth, and his nerves were thrilling with the emotions they had bred. And this dear girl, leaning toward him with spirit-lit face, as tense with her convictions as he with his, was the embodiment of all that northern feeling and activity which he so much resented, against which he protested with all his force as a base invasion of Southern rights.

But, even as his body throbbed with love and admiration for her fairness and sweetness, his spirit yearned toward the loftiness of hers. Ah, they were akin, they were mates, their spirits, even though they were opposed! He recognized in her that same fervency of faith, that same power of devotion to the mind's ideal, that were bone and sinew of his own temperament. And they were on opposing sides of this vital question—so intensely vital, he felt, to him, to his section, to the nation, to the whole of civilization! If only they were joined in their ideals!

“You see, Jeff, when they signed the Constitution, they hadn't come to realize yet how wrong slavery is. Men grow in knowledge of right and wrong, and we in the North have grown faster on this question than you have, because we haven't had



the comfort and the luxury and the wealth produced by that awful wrong to blind and hinder us. Our eyes have been opened—God has opened them for us, and we see slavery for what it is—a hideous, cruel, horrible thing that keeps human beings down and makes beasts of them, brutalizes the souls God made in his image!”

She clasped her hands and began to extend her arms beseechingly toward her listener. Her pink sleeves fell back a little and his heart swelled with longing to see the warm roundness of those arms reaching out to him in love and surrender. “Oh, Jeff, it is so wicked, so evil,” she began. “I wish I could make you see—” her voice broke, she drew back her arms and dropped her face into her hands, then sprang to her feet. “And—and—oh, Jeff—” her voice was thrilling with love, but it trembled upon sobs and she rushed to the door. “It is keeping us apart!” she cried, and the door closed behind her.

## CHAPTER XIII

Charlotte ran up stairs from the veranda and dashed into her sister's room. "Do look out, Rhoda," she called. "It's that crazy peddler, Chad Wallace. He's asking father if he can keep his wagon in our barn to-night. Now there'll be some fun this evening—he's so comical, with his songs and dances!"

Rhoda moved to the window and saw a little, wiry-looking man talking with Dr. Ware beside the east gate. A short, sparse growth of graying whiskers covered his face to the middle of his cheeks, and pale-colored hair curled around his neck below his shabby, bell-crowned hat. His wagon, with side curtains rolled up displaying boxes piled inside, was at the hitching post.

"He looks just the same as ever, doesn't he," she said calmly, as they stood beside the window with their arms about each other's waists. But her heart was beating faster, for she knew what his coming meant. She knew that in his dingy old wagon he was accustomed to make long trips on the Kentucky side of the river, ostensibly selling his wares in villages and at farms, but picking up, whenever opportunity offered, some fugitive slave and concealing him in a vacant space in the center,

around which the boxes and packages were carefully arranged. Then he would cross the river at the nearest ferry and put the runaway into the charge of an Underground "station." Or, sometimes, he would remain for months at a time in the neighborhood of one or another of the Underground routes through Ohio, apparently selling his stock of notions, but really conveying the fleeing slaves from one station to another.

Rhoda knew from her father that the people engaged in the Underground work considered him one of the safest of the "conductors." The commonplace character of his occupation and his eccentricities, which Dr. Ware told her were mainly assumed in order that he might appear all the more innocent, had proved so efficient a disguise as to prevent, even in pro-slavery communities, the least suspicion of his real business.

Word had come that afternoon that the expected half-dozen fugitives had safely reached the Kentucky shore and would cross the river in a row-boat after dark. Chad Wallace ate supper with the Ware household and entertained them with stories of his travels told with so many touches of eccentric humor that he kept the table in a breeze of laughter. Jeff Delavan, who was to leave for his home the next day, enjoyed them so much that he invited the peddler if he ever journeyed as far south as Lexington to drive on to Fair-

mount, where he would be glad to see him and listen to more of his amusing stories.

On the veranda after supper Charlotte begged Wallace for some of his funny dances, and he did negro shuffles and antics and sang negro melodies down the front walk to the gate. There he kept up the entertainment, interspersing the negro songs with doggerel of his own composition, until a delighted audience of children, young people and a few of their elders had gathered. Finally, waving his old hat at them, he walked away, breaking into a song that was much heard in those days at anti-slavery meetings:

"Then lift that manly right hand, bold plowman of the wave,  
Its branded palm shall prophesy 'Salvation to the Slave!'"

Jeff Delavan, listening on the veranda, started angrily, the amused smile died from his face and his brows knit in a frown. The tenor voice, still surprisingly good, though somewhat cracked by age, rang back from down the street as the slender, wiry figure disappeared in the dusk:

"Hold up its fire-wrought language that whoso reads may feel  
His heart swell strong within him, his sinews change to steel."

"Is he that sort of a crank?" Jeff exclaimed in a low voice to Mrs. Ware, who sat beside him. "If he is, I don't care about his coming to Fairmount."

"There's no harm in Chaddle Wallace," she responded assuringly. "He isn't much more than

half-witted, and nobody ever takes seriously anything he says or does. But he has this quaint vein of humor, so that people are always glad to see him and hear him talk. He loves music, too, but I don't suppose he cares at all about the meaning of the words. As for that abolition thing, why, he's just as likely to break into 'Dixie' and sing it with just as much gusto. Oh, no, Jeff, Chad Wallace is a harmless creature!"

It was some hours later and the house was dark, save for a light in Dr. Ware's office, when Rhoda, watching at her bedroom window, discerned some shapes in the darkness hurrying up the hill. As they emerged into the dim circle of light from the lantern at their east gate, she saw that it was Chad Wallace and his little band of runaway slaves. Softly she ran downstairs to admit them into the office. Her father was there, but asleep on the lounge. With the utmost caution, walking on tiptoe and speaking only in whispers, she and Lizzie brought into the office their supper of bread and meat and hot coffee and in half an hour they were ready to start again upon their way. As they stole silently out of the house Dr. Ware bundled three of them into his carriage, which Jim had ready at the gate, and the other three were quickly concealed in the peddler's wagon. With even less of noise than was usually occasioned by the physician's response to a night call, the party set forth on its journey to the next station.

Hurriedly extinguishing the lights and locking the doors, Rhoda stole back to her room and leaning from her window listened to the distant sound of wheels for assurance that, so far, all was well. Her heart beat high, as it always did after they had passed successfully through one of these night episodes. For she knew the never-ceasing danger that the fugitive might have been followed and trailed to their house. All along the southern border of the state there were numbers of men, from both sides of the river, who spent most of their time hunting runaway slaves, for the sake of the rewards for their capture. She and her father were well aware that their succoring of fugitives might be interrupted at any moment by the entrance of the United States marshal and his band of armed men, with consequent arrest, trial, and imprisonment.

The words that the peddler had sung were running insistently through her brain and as she lighted her candle she softly hummed:

*"Hold up its fire-wrought language that whoso reads may feel  
His heart swell strong within him, his sinews change to steel."*

"Yes, that's just it," she nodded to her reflection in the mirror, as she placed her hand against her heart. "That's just how it makes me feel whenever I think of any of the horrible things that slavery means."

She knew the history of the incident that had

given to the Quaker poet inspiration for the lines—the branding by a southern court with the letters “S. S.”—“slave stealer”—of the captain of a little coastwise vessel for attempting to carry some slaves from Florida to the Bahamas and freedom under English law. Holding up her own long, slender hand with knitted brows and lips compressed she gazed at the palm, as if trying to imagine how it would seem to feel the red-hot iron searing her own flesh. Then with a disdainful gesture she threw out her arm, her head high and eyes shining. “They may brand me on my palms and my cheeks and my forehead too if they like—what would that be beside this work!”

Counting on her fingers she murmured, “This makes twenty-five we’ve sent on to liberty—and in such a little time! Oh, we’re helping the slaves, and oh, please God”—she dropped on her knees beside her bed with her face in her hands, “please God, we’re doing something to help kill slavery!”

At the breakfast-table the next morning Delavan asked concerning the entertaining peddler and was told that he must have made an early start, as Jim on his first errand to the stables had reported his wagon already gone.

“Does he travel at night?” the young man asked. “Some time in the night, when I wakened after my first sleep, I thought I heard his wagon leaving the barn.”

Rhoda hastened to say that perhaps it was her

father's carriage he had heard, as he had had to make a night trip. Charlotte, chancing to look at her sister as Delavan asked his question, thought that Rhoda started and changed color ever so little. Immediately her alert mind began to wonder why, and she fixed her eyes sharply upon her sister's face. Rhoda felt her gaze and endeavored to change the subject quickly in order to ward off the insistent questions which it would be like Charlotte to begin to ask. But at that moment Bully Brooks came unexpectedly to her assistance. Passing under her chair he emerged from beneath her skirt and playfully leaped at a bit of string on the floor. Charlotte saw him and, remembering certain kittenish tricks which he had not yet grown too old to play beneath her own hoopskirts, she smiled knowingly at her sister and dropped the subject from her thought.

Later in the day Jefferson Delavan took his departure, and under his escort Mrs. Ware and Charlotte went down the river to Cincinnati. Since their argument on election day Rhoda had given him no opportunity to renew his love siege. Nevertheless, her heart was like lead in her breast, now that he was really going, and she was afraid to trust herself alone with him lest she would find herself saying, "Stay, oh, stay a little longer!" And yet she felt relief at the thought that the dear torment would now be lessened, glad that she



might rest from the keener strife within herself that his presence provoked.

When he bade her good-by he held her hand closely and said, "We've not spoken the last word yet, Rhoda Ware! I'm coming again some day, —though I hope I won't be exploded into your house the next time!"

Her eyes were serious upon his face, but she felt her cheeks growing warmer with the pressure of his hand. She told herself that she ought to withdraw her own, but afterwards she knew that she had not even tried to take it out of his clasp. "You'd better not come," she said gravely. "What is the use?"

"But at least I may come—to see your mother!" he exclaimed, smiling, and an answering ripple of mirth drove the gravity from her countenance.

It was nearly a week after the state elections before it was known certainly that the Democratic ticket in Pennsylvania had won, by a narrow margin, over the candidates upon whom the three other parties had united. Rhoda listened as her father, Hardaker, and the two Kimballs discussed the result. They were gathered around a cheerful blaze in the sitting-room fireplace, for the evenings had grown chill. Her mother and Charlotte had not yet returned.

"Oh, we've lost," said Dr. Ware calmly, "and among ourselves we may as well admit it, though

of course we'll keep up a hopeful appearance in public."

But Hardaker was more buoyant. "There's hope yet," he insisted. "Pennsylvania has always reversed her state victory at a following presidential election. And there's no reason to suppose that she'll do otherwise this time. I still believe we're going to win."

Rhoda saw her father suddenly compress his lips and throw a quick glance around their little circle. "To tell the truth," he said slowly in a low tone, "just here among ourselves, though I wouldn't admit it outside, I hope we are defeated this time."

The rest started with surprise and Walter Kimball exclaimed, "For God's sake, Dr. Ware! What do you mean?"

"Frémont is not the man we need. He hasn't the capacity, he hasn't the strength of character to meet the crisis the country would have to face if he should be elected. He's served a good purpose in this campaign—he's created enthusiasm and stimulated the growth of Republican sentiment. But that's all he's good for."

"Well, we've made a marvelous showing, anyway," said Hardaker in a triumphant tone, "and we've got the South scared and their northern allies shaking in their boots over the safety of their pet institution. In another four years," he straightened up, his eyes glowing, and went on in a voice of jubilant prophecy, "we'll sweep the country

and show the South that there's got to be an end of slavery!"

"Yes, we'll do it next time, if we haven't this!" exclaimed Lewis Kimball with enthusiasm. "But, as Dr. Ware says, we'll have to have the best man possible to lead the procession. Who'll it be? Frémont again? Seward? Governor Chase? What do you think, doctor?"

Rhoda watched her father anxiously as he gazed into the fire. "No, not Frémont—heaven forbid!" he began slowly. "He has revealed his weakness. Governor Chase is with us, heart and soul, but I'm afraid he isn't quite big enough. Seward?—Perhaps, if he hasn't proved too conservative by that time. Well, we'll have to work with all our might during the next four years and trust to God to raise up some man as a leader who'll have the wisdom of Solomon and the backbone of a granite mountain!"

## CHAPTER XIV

Almost as much heartened by the result of the presidential election as if it had been a victory, Dr. Ware and his friends and political co-workers in Hillside lost no time in renewing and extending the work of the campaign.

"If we have polled such a tremendous vote as this," they said, "when the party in many northern states was no more than a year old, what can we not do in the next four years?"

The Rocky Mountain Club, through which they had carried on the Frémont propaganda, was re-organized and every member went zealously to work again to win converts to their faith and add to their membership. Joshua Giddings, ardent apostle of the anti-slavery cause, journeyed down from his home in the Western Reserve during a recess of Congress and made for them a stirring speech. To another meeting came Governor Chase with words of hope and encouragement and practical advice. And on one memorable night Henry Ward Beecher roused an overflowing hall to a pitch of enthusiastic resolution hardly equaled even during the campaign.

Rhoda attended the meetings with her father and shared his zeal in the work the club was doing.

She and Mrs. Hardaker, Horace's mother, and Marcia Kimball organized an "Anti-Slavery Sewing Circle" which met at the houses of the members and made clothing for such of the refugees as reached the Hillside station ragged and shivering.

Mrs. Ware knew only in a general way of her daughter's interest and work in connection with this society, and of Rhoda's connection with the Underground she knew nothing at all. Deeply grieved, but not yet despairing, over the girl's refusal to marry the son of her old friend, she set herself to combat, in gentle, unobtrusive ways, what she believed to be the harmful influence exerted by her husband over their first-born.

She talked much with Rhoda about the delightfulness of plantation life and she dwelt long and lovingly upon Jeff Delavan's passionate devotion and upon his ambition and capacities which, she was sure, would result in a career of national renown. Rhoda hearkened with interest, saying but little in opposition, for her heart had begun to ache for her mother almost as much as it did for herself and she shrank from bringing the hurt look into those gentle eyes any oftener than she found necessary. But sometimes, when evasion was no longer possible, she would say, with caresses, and humble manner:

"Dear mother, you don't know how much all you tell me makes me long for that kind of life

and surroundings. I think the wish for them must have been born in me. But, mother, dear mother, I couldn't endure them if they meant being a part of slavery. Perhaps I should feel different about it if I had been born there, as you were, and had grown up in it."

Dr. Ware knew of the efforts his wife was making to win Rhoda's consent and, perceiving that her arguments and presentations made a strong appeal to their daughter's temperament, set himself to counteract any effect they might have by appeals to her conscience. But he openly urged no argument against the marriage, and in all his talk with her he took it for granted that the question was settled for good.

Once he told her the story of Fanny Kemble, then at the zenith of her fame,—of how, for love's sake, she had married a slaveholder, although herself convinced of the wrongfulness of slavery, and of how life on the plantation, in close contact with the system, had filled her with such loathing that she had not long been able to endure it.

"I am very glad, Rhoda," he added, "that you were able to appreciate, before it was too late, just what it would mean to marry into the South's 'peculiar institution.' You have saved yourself a great deal of unhappiness."

But especially did Dr. Ware have confidence in anti-slavery work as a preventive of possible weak-

ening in his daughter's determination. To that end he encouraged her in her sewing-circle activities, enlisted her help in the sending out of pamphlets, newspapers and other literature which was a part of the work of the Rocky Mountain Club, and entrusted largely to her care the refugee slaves who sought the shelter of their house.

Husband and wife said not a word to each other of their opposing desires. Silence upon the question of Rhoda and Delavan was a part of their lifelong habit of ignoring the question of slavery in their mutual relations. But each felt so much at stake in their silent struggle that gradually it forced them apart, and as the winter months wore on there grew up between them the first alienation of their married life.

Rhoda was soon sensible of the growing coldness between her father and mother and guessed its cause. Her heart ached over the unhappiness she had so unintentionally brought about and she spent much thought and many secret tears upon the endeavor to find some way out of the intolerable situation. Sometimes, in her misery over having brought such disaster into her home, she felt that, if it would only heal the breach, she could even sacrifice her scruples against becoming a part of the system of slavery.

"But it wouldn't do any good," was the conclusion to which she had always to come. "For if I were to marry Jeff it would make father bitterly

unhappy and he would blame mother for having influenced me to give way. And as long as I don't marry him mother will keep on feeling that it is father's fault and being angry with him because of it."

The hiding place for runaway slaves was completed during the stay of Mrs. Ware and Charlotte in Cincinnati, in October. It was a little, narrow room, or cell, long enough for a man to stretch himself at length on the floor and high enough for him to sit upright on a bench. On three sides and across the top, cords of wood for the winter fires were stacked in orderly array. But on the third side, containing the entrance, where there was only a little space between the room and the back wall of the shed, the wood was piled irregularly. From any but a very searching eye these apparently haphazard sticks would conceal the tiny, boarded structure, while in a moment they could be thrown aside and passage in or out made easy. Within, a pile of straw and some old quilts and carriage rugs made a bed comfortable enough, save on the worst of winter nights, for those who had seldom known a better.

If a wayfarer gave the four signal knocks on a night too bitterly cold for him to be housed in the woodpile shelter Rhoda, into whose charge her father had given most of the work of conducting their "station," risked discovery by making some arrangement for him within the house. Once,



when the traveler was a man alone, she bedded him for the rest of the night on the lounge in the office, until early morning, when Jim hurried him to the woodshed. Another time, when the supplants were a husband and wife and little child, a bed was improvised for them in Jim and Lizzie's room.

But, zealously absorbed though she was in this work and convinced that it was righteous and would have a good result, Rhoda was never free from twinges of conscience because it was being carried on without her mother's knowledge. "It is her home and it isn't fair for her not to know about it," she thought, time after time, as the winter went by. "Of course, she wouldn't like it and it would make her most unhappy to know about it, and it is very dear in father to want to save her the pain of knowing. I know it's right for us to do it—we must— Oh, dear! It's just another of these dreadful knots of right and wrong all mixed up that the North and South have tangled themselves into! And slavery is at the bottom of it all,—and slavery is the thing we must get rid of—tear it all out—no matter—no matter who is hurt!"

The winter months, with their likelihood of cold and storms, greatly lessened the Underground traffic. But even so, rarely a week went by without the coming of at least one dark-faced runaway from the South, trusting to find, at "the white

house on the top of the hill with a lantern at the gate," shelter, food, and help for the next stage of his journey.

For Rhoda it was a busy winter and its weeks sped by rapidly until the warming sun brought promise that the spring was already on her way. Then there came a night of cold and blustering wind with dashes of rain. It was near daylight when Rhoda was roused from sound sleep by Lizzie, who was bending over her bed and softly calling her name. A fugitive was downstairs, tired out and wet to the skin.

The runaway was a young mulatto, scarcely more than a lad, who had absconded from his owner, a horse dealer in a Kentucky town, because he had learned that he was about to be sold to a trader who was collecting a party of negroes for the owner of a Louisiana cotton plantation. He was already planning to earn enough money in Canada to buy "free papers" for his mother, who was owned by a merchant in the same town. But he was oppressed by the fear that she might be sold "down south" before he would be able to rescue her. From her box of clothing, kept on hand for such emergencies, Rhoda gave him new, dry garments, he was fed and warmed, and then taken to the woodshed shelter where, since he was so wearied, he was left to rest and sleep through all the next day.

Notwithstanding her many activities and her

zeal for the anti-slavery cause, Jeff Delavan was never absent long from Rhoda's mind, nor did she even try to banish him from her thoughts. Every now and then came a long letter from him which she read and re-read and pondered over, and finally answered at equal length. These letters she frankly read, with now and then a reservation, to her mother, who, as the months went by, began to hope that finally she and Jeff together would overcome the girl's resolution. Rhoda entered into the social gayeties of the town much less that winter than had formerly been her custom. Her days were so fully occupied and the nights were so likely to bring responsibility that she was reluctant to leave her post. Moreover, since she had become so much absorbed in anti-slavery work, social pleasures had for her less attraction. Charlotte giped at her frequently on this account.

"You're no better than an old maid already, Rhoda," she complained that same morning when the mulatto boy was sleeping in the woodshed. They were working together, dusting and tidying the big, bright living-room. Charlotte had been to a party the night before with Billy Saunders and his sister Susie, who was her particular friend. But it had taken much coaxing of her mother, with a final appeal to her father's indulgence, to win a reluctant consent for her to go without the watchful care of her elder sister.

"Really, I think it's unkind of you to stay at

home so much when you know mother doesn't like me to go without you."

"But she let you go last night."

"Yes, because father asked her to. But she didn't want to do it." Charlotte paused in her work and regarded her sister with brown eyes sparkling. "Say, Rhoda," she giggled, "do you suppose father would have sided with me if he'd known about—Horace, last fall?"

Rhoda laughed, then drew her face into admonishing seriousness. "Aren't you ever going to be ashamed of yourself about that, Charlotte? You ought to be!"

"Indeed I'm not! And I'll do it again some day, if you don't quit being such an old maid and sticking at home so much!"

"I guess Horace would know better another time."

"Well, he's not the only one!" Charlotte tossed her head and her saucy countenance twinkled with mischief. Rhoda noted her expression and wondered what it might portend, but said nothing. "If you're not going to marry Jeff Delavan," she went on, "it's time somebody else did! The idea of letting such a fine young man, with a beautiful old estate like Fairmount, pine away in single misery!"

"Jeff is free to marry any one he likes, who'll have him."

"Who'll have him! The idea! Rhoda, I never heard of such a simpleton as you are! Well, if

you're determined to be an old maid, after such a chance as that, you don't deserve a bit of sympathy, no matter what happens."

Charlotte pursed her lips to the tune of "Comin' thro' the Rye" and started toward the door. "Jeff was exceedingly nice to me on the boat going down to Cincinnati," she threw back with a bright glance over her shoulder.

"Jeff is a gentleman and is always very courteous and attentive to ladies."

"Oh, is he?" was Charlotte's response with a significant intonation. "Well, I'm awfully tired of all the young men in Hillside and—Horace isn't the only one, Rhoda!" she ended in her most teasing accents as she danced away, waving her duster.

In spite of all her efforts to drive it away, a dull ache settled in Rhoda's breast as she thought over Charlotte's words. She felt sure that behind them lay some intention of more moment than were that young lady's ordinary vagaries. As she had so often done before, she told herself sharply that she had no right to stand in Charlotte's way, that if she did not intend to marry Jefferson Delavan she ought not to try to hold his love. And her heart answered back triumphantly that Jeff knew very well he could not hope to make her his wife and that if he nevertheless chose to remain faithful to her she could not be blamed.

As she straightened the piano cover and set the chairs against the wall Rhoda's lips curved in

a proud little smile at the thought that his love for her was strong enough, her attraction for him potent enough, to hold his heart thus steadily against her constant refusal of his wish. For herself, she knew that she would never marry any one else. But it was different, she told herself, with a man. Naturally, she reflected, no one could expect him to remain true very long to a girl who told him "no" over and over again, and it would be no more than any man would be likely to do if he consoled himself with some other girl's love. It would be much harder to bear, she confessed to herself, if that girl should be her own sister than if she were some far-away being who would take Jeff entirely out of her life and leave him and their unfortunate love a mere memory.

The thought of such an ending of their romance, wherein she would be compelled to see her sister in the place which by right of love ought to be her own, made more insistent the ache in her heart and presently drove her upstairs to lock her door and take from her bureau the box tied with white ribbon. A number of letters lay in it now, beneath the faded rose. She took them out, caressingly, turning each one over in her hands, noting its date, glancing with soft eyes at its closely written pages. Then she began to read them as carefully as if she had not already pored over them a dozen times. For the most part they were arguments in defense of the institution of slavery and the interests of

his section. But these were interspersed with items of personal interest, little accounts of what he and his sister were doing, comments upon the duties and the pleasures of their life, and now and then an audacious mention, which would make Rhoda at first frown and then smile tenderly, of some holiday they would make or something they would do when she should be installed as mistress at Fairmount. But evidently her lover was hoping to win her by appeals to her intelligence, by trying to convince her that the ideals which he and his section cherished were righteous and desirable.

"I do not yet understand," she read in the latest letter, still unanswered, "how any one possessing a nature as noble and upright as I know yours to be can yet engage in that work in which you told me you glory so much. (I refer to the assisting of runaway slaves). I do not see how you can reconcile the deliberate breaking of the laws of your country and the taking of other people's property with the dictates of a scrupulous conscience. But I am well assured that you would not engage in this course if you did not believe it to be thoroughly honorable and right. And therefore I merely accept the fact and marvel at it."

"The negro is on a moral and intellectual plane so much lower than the white man," met her eyes in another letter, "that it is evident he was designed by an all-wise God to be the white man's servitor, just as are the other domestic animals.

The Almighty meant the white man to use him for his own benefit in order that he might the more easily mount to higher spheres of cultivation and achievement. Between the races there is a natural relation, ordained by God himself when he created the black so much inferior to the white, and we are but carrying out His decrees when we embody that natural, heaven-declared superiority and inferiority into the legal relation of master and slave."

Presently her attention was attracted by farther development of the same theme in a more recent missive: "The idea that it is possible for the negro to profit by civilization, to advance or develop, is a monstrous delusion, held only by a few people at the North who know nothing about his real character. To attempt to force him into channels of life and into efforts for which he is by nature unfitted, as they are bent on doing, would be to turn the natural order of things topsy-turvy and bring destruction upon the whole nation. For a free Negrodom in the midst of our republic would swamp it in savagery."

Over the concluding page of the last letter she pored thoughtfully, stopping now and then to consider again the ideas it contained. For she could not deny to herself the seductive appeal of the aims it set forth, whatever she thought of the arguments upon which they were based. Interested though she was in these lines, she yet remembered to keep



her hand over the bottom of the page. She knew what was there, but she knew too that if she hid it from eyes that would be drawn in that direction it would leap at her, when suddenly disclosed, with a fresh thrill of happiness.

"In this beautiful southland," she read, "we are working out what will prove to be the crowning glory of civilization. Here man, free to reach his highest possible development, enjoying political liberty, delivered by the divine institution of slavery from the hampering, benumbing effects of labor, surrounded by comfort, beauty, affluence, can produce the finest fruits of human effort. Here a refined and beautiful social order is being established, learning encouraged, chivalrous feeling and living made possible, womanhood revered, all intellectual achievement honored and sought after, and here letters and art will flourish as they have not flourished anywhere on the face of the earth since the Christian era began. Here will it be possible, and here only in all the world, for a modern Greece to grow into the fulness of beautiful flower. Here poets and artists and orators and statesmen and men of science and women, whose beauty and grace and talent will make them social queens as powerful as were the ladies of the French salons, will be appreciated and honored and find it possible to reach their finest, fairest development. Here in the new world, in our own native land, will be made possible a reincarnation

of all that 'glory that was Greece, and grandeur that was Rome,' as our own lamented southern poet has so beautifully sung."

Thus far she read, and then, lifting her eyes from the page, looked steadily away for a moment. A soft and tender light shone in their gray depths as, smiling gently, she dropped them again upon the page and removed her concealing hand.

"Is it not a glorious prospect, and is it not worth while, my own dear heart, to have some share in bringing about so grand a consummation? What better can I do in the world than to help my beloved South to maintain and extend her social order in which the negro, a mere animal, does the work for which he is fitted and to which he was appointed by the Creator, and the white man, created by God in His own image, is left unhampered to develop his own God-given talents and so produce such splendid results? But I am lonely, my dear one, and I long always for the presence and the companionship of the mate God made for me. Rhoda, darling, do not be cruel any longer! Tell me I can come and claim her! Always, your friend and lover, Jefferson Delavan."

For a little while Rhoda sat gazing at those closing lines, and then, with a sigh, she prepared to write her answer. She made several beginnings that did not suit her and tossed the pages to one side. "Dear Friend Jeff," she finally wrote. "Con-

cerning what you say about my doing things that are contrary to law, I must tell you that when men make laws that outrage every sense of right and justice in my own heart then I think that to disobey them is the only right and honorable course. The law of God is higher than the law of man. The law of God commands us to help the needy, to succor the oppressed, to aid the wayfarer, to deal justly by all men. That is what I have been doing and what I shall continue to do, although I break a whole houseful of man's unjust and wicked laws."

She worked on through his letter, seriously answering an argument here, gaily deriding a point there, now displaying a hint of tenderness in some inquiry concerning his welfare, and again replying with vivacious but evasive sallies to personal remarks in which the lover seemed to overbalance the friend, until at last she came to the closing page. Then she laid down her pen and read it over again, realizing fully the enthusiasm, ambition and youthful energy which stirred and fed his devotion to this ideal of his section, and feeling also to the depths of her soul how completely it parted them. Her lips were trembling and her eyes dim with tears as she took up her pen again.

"I will not deny," she wrote, "that the picture you draw of a South in which men and women would make the highest and finest kind of civilization, is very attractive to me. Or, rather, it

would be if your beautiful social order were not rooted in the hideous slime of slavery. I cannot believe that it would endure, or that it would be anything but a curse to the world as long as beneath it were the groans, the chains, the unpaid toil and misery of so many thousands of other men and women unfortunate enough to have been born with black skins. It will never be possible for you to claim me as long as you are a part of such a system. But I hope you will always remember me as your truest friend, Rhoda Adeline Ware."

She always signed her name thus in her letters to him, although she never used her middle name elsewhere, because it was a token of their mothers' friendship and so it seemed to her to belong specially to their intercourse and to give to it a shy little fragrance of exclusion, of separateness from everything else.

But when she had finished she pushed it all aside and dropped her face on her arm and her whole body trembled with a long, deep sob. Her heart was answering the call of his, which she had heard and refused to heed, through every line of his letters. They were so far apart, their faces were set toward such hostile ideals! And yet across that deep gulf their spirits clamored and their bodies yearned for presence, for companionship, each for its mate. Through a blur of tears she took up her pen and groped for a fresh sheet of paper.

"Oh, Jeff, Jeff," her pen was flying across the

page, "how will it be possible to endure this separation longer? Surely it is wrong for people who love as we do to tear themselves apart like this. I cannot endure it, and yet I cannot consent. Come then, and carry me away in spite of myself." Ah, it was a relief to give way to her feelings, to write the things she longed to say, even though she did not intend that he should ever read them. The pain in her face, the drawn look of mental suffering, began to fade out of it. "Tie my feet and my arms, if you must, so that I cannot run from you. Stop my lips with kisses, so that I cannot say I will not go. Take me in your arms and carry me away, anywhere, but do not let me deny our love any longer."

It was the cry of the primitive woman, whose sane instinct for the strong mate lives on through all the thousand and one denials and perversions of civilization. From the days when courtship was seizure, and first choice belonged to the strongest, has the wish to be won in spite of herself lived on in the heart of woman. It has been buried deep and ever deeper beneath the accruing refinements of humanity, and forced to find dwarfed expression in the subterfuges with which the civilized woman evades and refuses her wooer, that finally she may make pretense of her unwilling capture. But now, from beneath the depths of a million years, it rose suddenly to the surface of a strong woman's heart and overpowered all her strength.

Her hand was shaking and her bosom heaving as she put the sheet to one side. There was a knock at the door and Charlotte's voice called out: "Rhoda! Please let me have some of your paper. I've used mine all up."

Opening her door a mere crack she handed out paper and envelopes, for she had no wish to give her sister's inquiring mind a chance to speculate upon the reason for her agitated countenance. But it was only a moment more, with a little resolute drawing in of her breath and a pressure of her lips, and a minute or two before the mirror, until her composure was restored. Then she heard her mother in the hall: "Come, Rhoda! Come, Charlotte! Dinner's ready!"

"Yes, mother, in just a minute," she called back. Jeff's letters were quickly laid away in their box. Then she gathered up the sheets of her own letter and hurriedly folded them into the envelope, which she addressed and sealed. For after dinner she was going to a meeting of the anti-slavery sewing circle. The discarded sheets she twisted together and tossed into the fire.

## CHAPTER XV

At the dinner table Mrs. Ware's eyes rested with loving anxiety upon her first-born. "She is surely growing thinner and paler," was her motherly thought. "Poor child! If she would only give up to her love how much happier she would be! It's just eating out her heart, I know it is! If Jeff would take hold of her as Amos did of me—" and she glanced across the table at her husband, who in the grave responsibility of his middle age seemed far enough removed from the impetuous and masterful lover of her girlhood.

Quickly trailing upon the thought came recollection of that ride of which she had told Rhoda and Jeff, and then a wave of memories of his ardent courtship swept over and softened her heart. The coldness and resentment of the last few months were buried, for the moment, underneath their warmth and color, and her eyes sought his face again with more of fondness in their expression than he had seen there in many a day. Then her mind went back to her daughter.

"But I reckon that wouldn't answer with Rhoda, after all," she told herself. "She's so different. But I really believe she's beginning to feel more like giving up. The way she looked when she

read his last letter to me and when we talked about him yesterday—yes, she's surely finding out how much she really cares. If Jeff were to come up again now, perhaps—I'll write to him and tell him to come!"

The persuasion that perhaps the matter would come out all right added to the good feeling toward her husband already induced by her memories, and when they rose from the table she moved to his side and looked up into his face with a little glow of tenderness and affection in her own. With quick response he rested a hand upon her shoulder.

"Which way are you going this afternoon, Amos?" she asked.

"First to the Winslows, after I keep my office hour. Harriet is sick."

"Oh, poor little thing! I'll go over with you. I must write a letter now, but if you'll call me when you're ready to go I'll come down at once and we can drive past the post-office."

It was the first time in many weeks that she had wished to drive with him and he stooped and kissed her, saying, "I'll be glad to have you, Emily."

With her letter in her pocket Rhoda hurried away, past the post-office, to the meeting of the sewing circle, at Mrs. Hardaker's home. The members had planned to put in a particularly busy afternoon, for the coming of spring would be sure to bring with it an increase in the number of refu-



gees and they must have ready plenty of clothing suitable for warm weather.

Charlotte went back to her room and was soon absorbed in a composition that seemed to perplex her much. She wrote a few lines or words upon sheet after sheet, then frowned and shook her head and tore up and threw aside one after another until her table was littered with them. But at last, after much knitting of her brows and tapping with her gold pencil, she appeared satisfied with what she had done and copied it, in a few lines across the middle of the page, upon a sheet of the paper borrowed from Rhoda.

As she read it again, her eyes twinkled and her chin tilted to its most rebellious angle. "I reckon mother would put her foot down hard if she knew about it," she said to herself, and then pursed her lips and whistled a few notes. "And Rhoda would think it a very shocking thing for me to do. But I don't care, I'm going to. I reckon father wouldn't mind—indeed, I'm sure he'd be pleased. Yes, father would be glad enough if Jeff should— So it's all right." She giggled softly and the look of amusement deepened on her face as she addressed the envelope.

"There!" she exclaimed as she sealed the letter, "now there'll be some fun!" Springing to her feet she danced about the room, stopping in front of the mirror after a few steps to practise tilting

her hoopskirts, without seeming to do so, at a higher angle than she had ever dared before.

Mrs. Ware, starting downstairs, in bonnet and shawl, with her letter in her pocket, heard a shriek from Charlotte's room. "What's the matter, dearie?" she called in quick alarm, and opened the door.

Charlotte was standing on a chair in front of her closet door, her skirts drawn up to her knees, her two plump calves and slender ankles and trim little feet trembling with the agitation which shrilled in her voice: "Oh, mother, there's a mouse in my closet!"

"Oh, is that all, honey! My heart was in my throat, for I thought you must have half-killed yourself. Get Bully Brooks and shut him up in your room. He's getting to be a fine mouser. Dress yourself, honey, and look for him. I'd bring him up for you, but your father's waiting for me and I must hurry. Good-by, dear. I'll be back in two or three hours."

With anxious haste and many apprehensive glances at the harboring closet, now closed and locked, Charlotte dressed herself and hurried down stairs. "Do you know where Bully Brooks is?" she asked of Lizzie in the kitchen.

"Dat good-fo'-nuthin' cat?" teased Lizzie, with a broad grin at Charlotte's pantomimic threats of displeasure and retaliation. "I done see him jess now streakin' out to'd de bahn wif his tail in

de air, like he was totin' a flag at de head of a percession."

Charlotte sped down the walk to the barn and looked all about and called softly, "Bully Brooks! Bully Brooks!" The door leading from the barn into the woodshed was open and she thought, "Maybe he's gone in there."

"My! What a lot of wood we've used this winter!" she said to herself. "The last time I was in here, last fall, the shed was nearly full. And now there's only that pile in the middle." She moved toward the back of the inclosure, her gaze searching the corners, then falling upon the irregularly piled sticks at the back of the neat cords.

"There he is!" she exclaimed softly, as she saw a gray tail sticking out from between the logs. Speedily she bore down upon him. "Here, 'yo' good-fo'-nuthin' cat,'" she muttered, "come out here." She made a grab for his tail, but he whisked it suddenly aside, and went on, threading his way between the chunks of wood, his head stretched out and nostrils working.

"Oh, you think you smell something, do you? Well, just come right along with me and see what you can smell in my room." But she could not quite reach him, and she began tossing to one side the smaller sticks. In a moment her eyes fell upon the boarding of the hidden room. "What can that be?" she wondered, pausing in her work. With Charlotte, to have her curiosity aroused was

only to fire her determination to have it assuaged. So now she eagerly threw out of the way the remaining pieces and saw plainly the tiny house. "There's a door in it!" she whispered, and straightway stepped up and peeped in.

There she saw the negro runaway asleep upon the straw pallet. On the bench were the remains of his dinner, with pans and plates and cups which she recognized as having come from their own cupboard.

For a moment she stared, bewildered. Then, as the boy stirred in his sleep, she picked up Bully Brooks, shut the door softly and hurried back to her room. Her thoughts darted at once to the heart of the mystery.

"They're stealing niggers, that's what they're doing, father and Rhoda! My! It's worse than stealing horses, or money!" Her face was hot with indignation and her eyes blazing. "They ought to be arrested, even if they are my father and sister. Why, it might be one of Jeff's niggers they're stealing. Just think of it! Nigger thieves! They ought to be punished—they deserve to go to prison—and they would, too, if it was known!"

She stopped in the midst of her fuming as an idea flashed across her mind. It took her breath away for a moment. Then she drew back from it with a little feeling of repugnance. But in a moment more her busy, resentful thought was

hovering around it, experimenting with it, considering it with more and more of favor.

"There's no telling how many slaves they've hidden in there and sent on to Canada. Thousands of dollars worth, it's likely. And their owners just raking the country and spending money trying to find them. Oh, it's a shame the way these black abolitionists act! Father and Rhoda are just as bad as any of them. Nigger thieves! O, my! And that nigger out in the woodshed, he belongs to somebody just exactly the same as if he was a horse or a cow. He ought to be taken back. He's somebody's property, and it's wrong and against the law to steal him, or to help anybody else to steal him. If I don't tell somebody that he's here, so he can be taken back to his owner, I'll be a nigger thief, just the same as they are."

She tied her bonnet under her chin, adjusted her cape around her shoulders, took a last look in the glass, and turned toward the door. Her eyes chanced to fall upon the letter, lying on the table.

"O, my goodness, I'm about to forget that!" she exclaimed, seizing the missive. She giggled and tilted her chin and said aloud, "Yes, I shall, I shall do it!" Then she touched her lips to the superscription and airily waved the envelope toward the south. With another gay little laugh she tucked it into her pocket. And so it happened that when the mail-bag left the Hillside post-office

that afternoon it carried three letters for Jefferson Delavan.

As she came out of the post-office Charlotte found herself face to face with her admirer, Billy Saunders. "Is Susie at home?" she asked.

"Yes, and expecting you. Are you going there?" He turned and walked up the street at her side. Her cheeks still showed a heightened color and the fires of her indignation glowed in her eyes. "You're looking mighty pretty this afternoon, Charlotte. What's happened?"

"What's happened, indeed!" Charlotte tossed her head. "Does there have to be a wedding, or a funeral, or a steamboat accident before I deserve a compliment?"

"No, indeed! You always deserve more compliments than I have sense enough to think of. But you look excited, as if something unusual had happened."

Charlotte turned toward him, her heart swelling with excitement over the momentous secret she had discovered. At this final moment it was chiefly the childish need of sharing her knowledge that urged her to speech. "Say, Billy, can you keep a secret?"

"As well as you can, I reckon."

"I've just got to tell somebody, or I'll fly into a thousand pieces!"

"Don't do that!" he begged in mock alarm. "Out with it, and save the pieces!"

"Well, then, there's a nigger in our woodpile!"

A flash crossed his face. "What do you mean?" he ejaculated, stopping short.

"Just what I say. He's hid among the wood in our woodshed. There's a little house there."

"Well—" he hesitated over his answer as they walked on. "I reckon it's all right," he hazarded. But he was thinking rapidly. Here, in all likelihood, was the proof for which the pro-slavery sympathizers had long been watching. Dr. Ware's outspoken sentiments and his activity in the anti-slavery movement had caused them to suspect he was connected with Underground operations.

"Are you sure you weren't dreaming?" he asked jocularly. "When did you see him and what was he doing?"

"Do I usually dream around in the daytime, Billy Saunders? I saw him about an hour ago and he was sound asleep. And if you think I don't know a nigger when I see one you can go and look for yourself!"

They had reached the Saunders gate and he lifted his hat in farewell. "Remember you're to keep that secret," she called after him, in appeasement of a sudden compunction.

"Oh, I can keep a secret as well as you can," he laughed back. Secretly a little troubled by his answer, but saying to herself defiantly, "Well, they deserve whatever happens, anyway!" she went into

the house. He quickened his steps to the office of the United States marshal.

At the home of Mrs. Hardaker the members of the anti-slavery sewing circle were busy over their needles when Rhoda, from her seat near a front window, saw Horace dash up the street in a buggy. Springing out, he came up the front walk almost on a run. He saw her face at the window and beckoned. She went out and met him at the front door.

"Is there any U. G. baggage at your house, Rhoda?" he asked at once in low, anxious tones.

"Yes. A young man came late last night and has been sleeping all day."

"Then that's it! I just now discovered that Marshal Hanscomb was on the track of something, and I was afraid it might be there! I've got a case in court that will be called in ten minutes, but I borrowed this buggy from my client and rushed over here. Is your father at home?"

"No. I've got to go and get him away." She was hurrying into her bonnet and wrap.

"You'd better let me—"

"No, no. You can't leave your case. That would be too suspicious. I'll manage it."

"Don't walk home—take this buggy." They were already rushing to the gate and he went on as he assisted her to the seat: "There's not a minute to lose. Hanscomb's getting ready now to start out with his men."



She was soon in the cross street upon which backed their row of outbuildings. Here a wide door gave entrance to the woodshed. It was kept padlocked and she had to waste a few minutes finding Jim to unlock the door. The young negro, dazed by this sudden awakening to danger, was hustled into the buggy, a small, uncovered, box-seated vehicle. Rhoda made him double up in the little space at her feet and covered him with a carriage rug. Then over her own lap and down over him she spread an ample robe, which Jim hastily tucked in at the sides.

"I'll try to reach Gilbertson's with him," she said to the faithful black man as the horse sprang forward at her whip's touch. She made a détour around several blocks and struck into the street leading to the country in the first valley beyond the house. This lost several minutes at the start, but she reflected that if the marshal should arrive in time to see her driving straight away from the house he might be suspicious enough to make chase at once. As it was, one of his men, on guard at their gate, saw her buggy as it turned from a cross street into the country road, but, at the moment, thought nothing of it. Looking back, she saw the men ride up to their gate and knew that they would search the house.

"They'll have their trouble for their pains," she thought. "But wasn't it a narrow chance! You poor boy, I'm going to save you, anyway!"

She wondered what hint had come to the marshal's ears, and decided it must have been suspicion rather than actual knowledge that had brought him to search their house at this particular time. Most likely the fugitive had been seen on his way to their house by some of the many eyes ever on the alert for such as he, and her father's reputation as a strong anti-slavery man and abolitionist had given Marshal Hanscomb a pretext.

"But he'll never think of looking in the wood-pile," she told herself with a smile of satisfaction. "That secret is perfectly safe, for nobody knows it but us and Horace. Our little hiding place will be as safe as ever, even if they do search the house!"

She looked back anxiously from the top of the high hill, whence the road entered a sparsely wooded belt of country, and saw that the horses were still hitched at their side gate. "I'm getting a good start, even if they do follow me," she reflected, "and I guess I can make Gilbertson's."

But the horse was a slow traveler and, although she urged him constantly with voice and whip, to Rhoda's anxious eyes they seemed to cover the ground at but a snail's pace. She thought they must have been on the road nearly an hour when, from the top of a long, sloping hill, she glanced backward and saw a party of four mounted men crossing the rise she had just left behind. She recognized it at once as Marshal Hanscomb and

his aids. They were riding at a much faster pace than her horse could equal and she knew that in a few minutes they would surely overtake her and, in all probability, stop her and search the buggy.

For one brief flash the thought crossed her mind what that would mean—arrest, trial, and afterward imprisonment. But that fleeting picture was instantly gone and in its place came the vision of the lad at her feet being carried back to scourging and slavery. As she urged the horse down the hill at a reckless pace she remembered that he was about to be sold “down south”—that land of fears and terrors which to the negroes of the border states was a doom almost as awful as was the fiery gulf which threatened the impenitent sinner. It occurred to her that the hill was the same one where she had met the slave, Andrew, on that momentous day of the previous summer.

“If I can make the bottom, and get him safe on that path to the cave before they see him— O, God, help me!” She thought of the boy’s old slave mother, waiting and trusting for his promised help to rescue her from bondage, and lashed her horse again. With a firm hand she held the lines, her eyes on the road ahead and her touch guiding the horse along the safest track. With a jerk they stopped short at the bottom of the hill and she pulled away the coverings.

“Get up, quick!” she warned. “They’ve followed us, and you must hide. Climb that fence—

do you see that path over there? Run down that—it will bring you to a thicket of hazel bushes. Behind them, in the hill, there is a cave. You'll be safe there, until I or some one comes for you. But don't stir out of it until you hear the word, 'Canada,' three times. They're right behind us—run fast!"

He needed no more warning, but was over the fence and speeding like a deer along the faint pathway. There was no foliage now to screen his figure and he would have to get beyond the bend in the hill, where the path dropped downward again, before he would be safe from sight. Rhoda gave one quick backward glance—they had not yet come into view. The fleeing mulatto reached the big rock, turned it, and disappeared. With a little catch in her breath she gathered up her lines, straightened the carriage robes and urged her horse forward again. There was no need of haste now, and the sooner the interview with the marshal was over the sooner he would go back and leave her free to bring the boy from his hiding place and go on her way. So she let the horse slowly climb the rise, while she heard the pursuing party clattering down the other slope. Presently they were beside her.

"Miss Ware, by authority of the law, I shall have to search your buggy," said the marshal's voice, at the wheel. One of his men rode to the horse's head and seized the bridle.

"What for?" she asked, with well-simulated surprise.

"You are under suspicion of concealing in it a fugitive slave. I know that he was hidden in your woodshed"—Rhoda's heart sank and she felt her eyelids quiver—"as late as this afternoon. But you got him out before we reached there, and came out on this road by a roundabout way. We've had our eyes on your father for a long time. And now I reckon we've caught him, and you too!"

Rhoda looked at him and was able to command a smile. "Excuse me," she said politely, "but how many did you say you thought I had concealed in this buggy?"

"Only one," the marshal answered curtly. "You can get out if you want to while we examine it."

She jumped to the ground and stood by, smiling, while they took out the rugs and looked under the seat.

Disappointed glances passed from one to another. Evidently, they had felt sure they would find the missing slave in her buggy. Rhoda took off her wrap and shook it ostentatiously. "You see, I haven't got him concealed about my clothing. You can search my pocket too, if you like," she added innocently.

"You've beat us this time, young lady," he responded angrily, "but we know what your father is up to, and you with him, and we'll get you yet."

She turned upon him with dignity. "May I

ask, Mr. Hanscomb, that you will finish your examination of this little buggy where there is scarcely room for one, as soon as possible, so that I can go on. I am on an errand for my father, and I would like to finish it and get home before dark. Perhaps you would like to look under the horse's collar and split open the whip-stock."

The marshal flushed with annoyance. "All right. You can go on now. But you'd better be careful about taking in any more niggers."

She drove slowly on up the hill and they brought their horses' heads together for a conference. She was trembling with anxiety lest it might occur to them to search the woodland on the west of the road, and she wanted to know what they were going to do before she would have to pass out of sight down the other side of the hill. To gain time she dropped her whip, and jumped out to get it. Then she adjusted a buckle in the harness and examined a thill strap. A stolen glance let her see that they were starting back toward the town.

But now a new anxiety filled her. Did they know of the cave? Would they think of it as a possible hiding place? The cave was such a little one,—it was of no interest to any one but children—perhaps they had never heard of it, or had forgotten it if they had. She longed to look around and see if they stopped, but she feared to show interest in their movements, lest she might

renew their suspicions. Had the boy left footprints as he ran from the buggy to the fence? She tried to remember whether the ground there was hard or muddy, but could recall nothing. In an agony of apprehension she reached the top of the hill and started down the descent.

"I must know, whatever happens," she presently said to herself. Stopping the horse she sprang out and ran back a little way, to where her eyes could command the opposite hill. The horsemen were disappearing over its crest. Her knees were shaking as she hurried back to the buggy, but she pulled herself together and considered what would be the best plan to get the fugitive out of the cave and on to the next station. For she feared to go back openly now, lest some member of the marshal's party might return. A little farther on, she remembered, was a cross way and striking off from this, a short distance to the westward, an old wood road which ended near the cave. "It used to be there," she thought anxiously, "but I haven't been down it since—oh, I don't know when! I'll have to take chances on its being there yet."

But on the cross road she met farmer Gilbertson, in a big, deep-bedded wagon filled with a load of loose hay. She told him of her narrow escape.

"You better drive in and get him in your little buggy," he advised, "and I'll wait out here and take him home with me, under the hay. It'll be safe enough—this road ain't traveled much."

It was not long until Rhoda was driving homeward again, deep joy in her heart that the fugitive had escaped such imminent danger, but wondering much how the marshal had discovered the secret of their woodshed.



## CHAPTER XVI

When Mrs. Ware reached home that afternoon she found Marshal Hanscomb and his men, baffled and angry, completing their search of the house.

"Mr. Hanscomb, what does this mean?" she demanded.

"It means that runaway niggers have been making a hiding place of your house and that we've been barely too late to catch one."

"I assure you, Mr. Hanscomb, that nothing of the sort has been going on in my house. Dr. Ware's sympathies, it is true, are with the anti-slavery cause, but he is not a nigger stealer."

"If you think so, madam,"—there was the hint of a sneer in his tone—"you'd better go out to the woodshed and look at that room built into the middle of your woodpile and see how lately it's been occupied."

She turned upon him a face of offended dignity. Her small, plump figure, in its balloon-like skirt, stiffened with a haughtiness which impressed even the angry marshal. "I trust, sir, that you have satisfied yourself there is no one concealed in the house or on the premises."

"We have, madam, for the present. We happened to be a few minutes too late."

"Then I will bid you good-evenin'." With a stately nod she left him, going at once to her own room, behind whose closed door she remained until her husband's return.

Rhoda and her father, coming from opposite directions, drove up to their east gate at the same moment, in the red glow of a March sunset. She told him hurriedly of the happenings of the afternoon and of the narrow chance by which she had finally saved the mulatto lad from recapture. At the veranda steps Jim met them, with an excited account of the marshal's visit and his search of the house. He evidently knew of the woodshed hiding place, the man said, for he went to it at once.

"Was any one at home?"

"No, sah, nobody but Lizzie and me. But Mrs. Ware, she done come before they leave."

"Then she knows now," Rhoda told herself. "Oh, to think she had to find it out that way!"

They walked silently down the veranda, avoiding each other's eyes, and entered at the front door. Mrs. Ware was coming down the stairs. Rhoda stopped short, but her father walked swiftly past her and held out his hand to his wife. She could not see his face, but the look on her mother's countenance stabbed her to the heart. In it the girl read resentful inquiry, wounded faith, re-

proachful love. They seemed oblivious of her, as Mrs. Ware stood looking into her husband's face with that hurt look upon her own. She did not take the hand he held out. Then Rhoda saw him sweep her close to his side and heard him say in a choking voice, "Come, Emily!" He led her into the living-room and closed the door.

What passed between them there Rhoda never knew—what confessions of outraged rights, what heart-barrings of living tenderness, what recognitions of inner imperatives, what renewals of the bonds of love and trust. She crouched where she had dropped on the stair step, miserably conscious that this was the climax of the estrangement over her between her father and mother, feeling keenly that it had been her mother's right to know the use that was being made of her home, appreciating her father's motive in wishing to keep it hidden, remorseful for the wound her share in it would deal her mother's heart, but unable to give up one jot of her conviction that what she and her father had been doing had been demanded of them by the highest laws of God and the most sacred rights of man.

In a jumble of thought and feeling, swept by waves of passionate sympathy and compassion for both of the two within that closed door, Rhoda sat huddled on the stairs until her mother came out. "Mother!" she called, springing up and holding out her hands.

Mrs. Ware came up and took them, saying simply, "How cold they are, honey!" and pressed them to her breast. In the dim light the girl could see that her face was very pale but that her eyes were shining with calm happiness.

"Oh, mother! We both felt that you ought to know about it—"

"It's all right, dear child. I would rather your father had confided in me from the first—"

"It wasn't that he doubted you, mother! Oh, don't think that! He knew you would be loyal to him—but he thought it might give you pain to know—"

"Yes, honey, I understand—I appreciate all that. But don't you see, dear, I would have liked to be trusted by my husband, even if it had hurt—a little?"

"It was your right to know, mother."

"Perhaps I don't think so much about that as you would, Rhoda, but—a woman who loves needs to feel that she is trusted as well as loved. But it's all right now. I know how you and your father feel about it, that you are doing only what seems to you right, although to me, dear child, it seems very wrong. I don't want to know any more about it than I must, and you mustn't expect me to help you in the least, but not for the world, dearie, would I hinder you and your father from doing what you think is right."

Rhoda bowed her head upon her mother's shoulder whispering, "Dear mother!"

"Your father and I understand each other better now," Mrs. Ware went on in tender tones. "There has been some misunderstanding between us about you and Jeff, but this has cleared it all up, and so I am glad it happened. He has promised me that he will not try to influence you in any way against marrying Jeff. So you see now, dearie, that it is possible, after all, for husband and wife to live together in love and trust and happiness, even though they do hold opposite opinions about slavery!"

There was a sound of quick, light footsteps across the veranda and Charlotte came in breezily, cheeks glowing and eyes sparkling. "What's the matter?" she exclaimed. "What's happened?" Then sudden recollection came to her of what probably had happened and of her own share in it, and a look of confusion crossed her face. Rhoda saw it and instant suspicion was born in her mind that here was the medium through which information had reached the marshal.

"Sister, was it you?" she asked on the impulse, her tone gentle but reproachful.

"Was what me?" Charlotte flared back.

"I think you know what I mean."

Dr. Ware had come out of the living-room and was standing in the doorway. Charlotte threw at him a coaxing, appealing glance.

"You'd better tell the truth about it, Charlotte," he responded. The girl shrank back a little at his tone and something of surprise crossed her face. Never before had he spoken to her with so near an approach to sternness. His large, calm eyes were upon her, dispassionate but disapproving. She could not withstand their compulsion.

"Well, then, I did," she exclaimed defiantly, tossing her head as she took a step forward. "And I think I did no more than was right and I'm glad I did it. When people are disobeying the laws and are criminals, even if they are your own people—"

"There, child, that will do," her father interrupted, lifting an admonishing hand. "Remember, please, that you are only eighteen, and that your father is in no need of moral instruction at your hands. I understand how you feel about this question and I am perfectly willing for you to believe as seems to you right. I expect you to grant the same privilege to me and to every other member of my family. And as long as you live under your father's roof, my daughter, he has the right also to expect from you loyalty to his interests. Do you think I shall have it hereafter?"

Charlotte burst into tears. In all her saucy little life no one had ever spoken to her with such severity. "I only told Billy Saunders," she sobbed, "and I told him not to tell!"

Instantly her father was beside her, patting her

shoulder, an arm about her waist. "There, there!" he soothed. "I didn't suppose you realized what you were doing. As it happened, no great harm came of it. Just remember, after this, that it is not your duty to sit in judgment on my actions. Then we shall all move along as happily as ever."

When Rhoda went to her room and her eyes fell upon her writing table, sudden misgiving caught her breath. She had not stopped to make it tidy, after her letter-writing in the morning, because of her hurried departure for the sewing circle, and its unaccustomed disorder brought sharply to her mind the letter she had written. And that other sheet—had she destroyed it, as she meant to do? She looked the table over hastily, shuffling the clean sheets of paper in her hand. "How silly!" she thought. "Of course I destroyed it! I remember, I picked up several sheets together that I didn't want, and burned them, and that was among them!"

Still, for a moment, the uneasy fear persisted that perhaps she had put it into her letter. She burned with shame at the thought that her lover might read those words. Then with a sudden vault her mind faced about and she felt herself almost exulting that at last he might know how much she cared, that at last, in spite of herself she had surrendered.

"If I did send it," she thought as she sat at

her window, in the dark, "he will come and I shall have to give up."

Her mother's words recurred to her: "You see that it is possible for husband and wife to live together in love and trust and happiness, even though they do hold opposite opinions about slavery." They would be happy—ah, no doubt about that! And perhaps, if they were married and constantly together, she could make Jeff see the wrongs of slavery. She could point out to him specific instances of injustice and rouse that side of his conscience which now seemed to be dead. He had such a fine, noble nature in all other things—it was only because he had been brought up in this belief and had always been accustomed to taking slavery for granted. With his great love for her she would surely be able to exert some influence over him, and she would use it all to one end.

She knew of other men who had been slaveholders but, becoming convinced that it was wrong, had freed their slaves and joined the anti-slavery ranks. Some, even, worked with the Underground Railroad. What a splendid thing it would be if she could win him over to the side of liberty! For such a result, she told herself, she would be willing to crucify her conscience for a little while and be a part of the thing she abhorred.

She slept that night with a smile on her face and when she wakened in the morning her first consciousness was of an unusual lightness and



happiness in her heart. Then she remembered, and flushed to her brows.

“But it was all true,” she whispered. “I didn’t mean to send it, and I’m sure I didn’t. But I—almost—wish I had.”

## CHAPTER XVII

When Jefferson Delavan received the mail containing the three letters from Hillside his lover's eye saw at once the envelope bearing the handwriting of Rhoda Ware. Everything else was pushed aside and this was hastily torn open. He turned the sheets over and swept them with a hungry look, as though he would devour all their contents at one glance. And so it happened that before he had read another line his eyes fell upon the page on which she had poured out her heart, which she thought she had burned—but almost wished she had not.

He had to read it twice before he could believe that his eyes were not playing him some trick. Then he sprang up joyously, with a great light in his face, and ordered his horse. The rest of his mail, even to Rhoda's letter, was thrust into his pocket, while he made ready for immediate journey. Slaves went scurrying hither and thither, urged to unaccustomed speed by their master's impetuous commands, and in less than half an hour he was in his saddle.

He struck across the country on the turnpike road straight for the Kentucky shore of the Ohio river opposite Hillside. Quicker time might have

been possible by the more roundabout route by railroad to Cincinnati, but his only thought was that thus he was headed directly toward the white house on the hill.

He galloped his horse for an hour or two before he remembered that it would be the part of wisdom not to take too much out of it at the start, laughed aloud as he slowed down, slapped its neck in sheer joy, and sang lustily the tale of "Lord Lovell." Then he remembered that he had not read the whole of Rhoda's letter. He drew it forth, and was reminded in so doing that he had other letters in his pocket. But they could wait. He plunged into hers and read it eagerly through, dropping the bridle and allowing his horse to take a slower pace. Now and then he smiled or gave a little, tender laugh, as he came upon a mirthful sally, or again he frowned thoughtfully and shook his head at her argument. And presently he was staring in bewilderment at the closing paragraph with its denial of his suit. His heart sank as he hastily searched out the other sheet for reassurance. Yes, there it was, and there could be no mistaking the longing call of her heart that spoke so piteously through its brief lines.

"This other, she wrote with her head," he told himself, "and then her heart gave up and made her write this. Ah, the dear, dear girl! It's like her to surrender like this, so completely, and even against herself when she lets her heart get the

upper hand. Oh, my arms will be all the tying she'll need, and there'll be kisses enough to stop her mouth as long as we live!"

With a caressing touch he put the missive away in an inner pocket and urged his horse on again, smiling and humming softly. At last he recalled the other letters. Mrs. Ware's he read first and found in it confirmation of the view he had already taken of Rhoda's surprising message. The girl was evidently longing for sight of him once more, her mother said, and if he were to come soon perhaps he could storm her stubborn heart. He laughed again and exclaimed aloud, "Yes, indeed, I'm coming, and if there's any more storming necessary—" and the sentence broke off into another exultant laugh.

Then he bethought him of the other letter. It was without date line or signature and with puzzled eyes he read its few lines, in the middle of the page: "When true hearts pine and gallants stay away, then what can ladies do? Alas the day, they can but pine when cruel gallants come no more!"

He looked the sheet all over and examined the envelope inside and out to find some clue to its authorship. But there was not the least sign, and the postmark was indistinct. It was written upon the same kind of paper and inclosed in the same kind of envelope as Rhoda always used, but the handwriting was not Rhoda's, and it seemed so

unlike her to send such an indirect, silly little message that he said at once, "No, it's not from Rhoda." But who could there be among his friends or acquaintance likely to take such interest in his courtship, of which so few of them knew, and send him this sort of romantic hint? Of course, it might be from some friend of Rhoda's in whom she had confided.

"It must be that little rogue of a Charlotte!" he presently exclaimed. "She has sharp eyes in her head, that's plain enough, always, and she has seen how it is with her sister and thought she might help things along by giving me a hint. Bless her heart! She's a dear little thing, if she does like to flirt, and after Rhoda and I are married we'll bring her down to Fairmount and give her the best time she's had in all her life and perhaps marry her to Lloyd Corey or Frank Morehead."

While this was not the outcome of her anonymous message which Charlotte hoped to bring about when she penned it, she would perhaps have been as willing to accept it, had her thoughts ranged so far ahead, as the one she planned to compass. Nor would she have been taken aback had she known, while she fluttered about on the tiptoe of expectancy for whatever might happen, with what ardor Jefferson Delavan's thoughts were turning toward Rhoda on his northward ride.

If her missive induced him to come again to their house what did it matter whether he thought

its words referred to Rhoda or to some one else? Since Rhoda was determined she would not marry him, he would soon find out his mistake and would be quite willing to look for consolation elsewhere. Had he not shown her every attention on the trip to Cincinnati? And when had she failed to set a man's heart aflame, if she had really wanted to witness the conflagration? Let her once more have the opportunity—and she smiled at the brown eyes reflected back from her mirror, confident that they had lost none of their power.

He would be able to reach the Ohio river by the morrow's night, Delavan thought, and the next morning he would cross over and hasten up the hill to claim the sweet promise that beckoned to him from that glimpse of Rhoda's secret heart. As he mused over her words, and the wonder of it that she should at last have called him, it occurred to him that perhaps she had not meant to put that sheet into her letter. Perhaps she had merely written down that revelation of her feelings as ease to her own aching heart. But he laughed joyously.

"She's let me know how it is with her, whether she meant to send it or not, and I'll do just as she begs me to, this time!"

And so he urged his horse onward, his glowing heart beating high in his breast, sure of the happiness waiting for him at the end of his journey, and counting off the lessening hours that lay be-

tween him and the banks of the river. But that night there came a violent rainstorm that carried away bridges and left swollen streams rushing through overflowed valleys. It delayed him two days, so that it was not until the sixth day after Rhoda penned her letter that he reached Hillside.

And in the meantime the Supreme Court had announced its decision in the Dred Scott case, delighting the South, staggering the North, and fanning to still higher and hotter flame the fires of contention over the ever-burning question of slavery. Jefferson Delavan heard the news as he fumed over his delay, storm-bound in the hotel of a country town. He and half a dozen other slave owners from the town and near-by plantations, who dropped into the hotel during the evening, rejoiced over the victory as they sat around a bowl of punch.

"This will put an end to the whole controversy and give the country peace at last," said Delavan.

"It knocks the feet from under the Republican party," declared another. "They'll be capable of no more mischief now!"

"Yes, gentlemen," exclaimed a third, "it surely ties the hands of the northern fanatics. They can no longer stop our growth!"

"Under the protection of this decision," Delavan followed on, "we can take our slaves wherever we like, and, with the northern Democracy be-

coming more and more favorable to us, we shall soon win back the ground we have lost!"

"Nor will our growth be all in that direction!" said another, slowly and significantly.

"No, indeed!" was Delavan's quick response. "Mexico and Central America will be ours for the taking as soon as we realize our strength. Gentlemen!" He sprang to his feet, his face glowing with enthusiasm, his glass held high. "Gentlemen, I give you a toast: To the Republic of the South, our own fair Land of Dixie, firm footed on the foundation of slavery, and spreading wide wings North, South, East and West; her day shall come soon and endure forever!"

With shouts of approval the others were on their feet at once, drinking the toast, cheering the sentiment, and waving hats, pipes, glasses, whatever their hands could seize. And no ghost of a misgiving visited Jefferson Delavan, in the midst of their exultant rejoicing, as to how that decision might affect his personal fate.

To Rhoda Ware, as she looked back upon them, the days following that of her adventure with the negro lad were like a beautiful dream. After her one moment of apprehension she did not believe that she had put into her letter the telltale sheet whereon she had poured out her heart. She was sure she had burned it. But that instant of anxious fear that her lover would read her confession had given to her traitor heart its opportunity. In the



brief respite of secret rejoicing she had allowed it to take, it had leaped to the saddle and it would not give up again to her mind and conscience the right of command. So she submitted to the sway of her love and battled with it no more.

"He will know—he will feel it, even though I didn't send what I wrote," she whispered to herself. "And if he doesn't come soon, I will write to him—and tell him—yes, I'll tell him to come!"

She spent much time alone in her room, seated at a southern window that commanded a view of the street leading up from the steamboat landing, the little bundle of letters and the faded rose held caressingly in her hands. It happened that no fugitives came to their door during this time, or she might have suffered sudden awakening from her dream.

As it was, she thought of nothing but the coming of her lover and her surrender to his suit. Now and then her reverie strayed on into the future and she pictured their life together in Jeff's beautiful home at Fairmount, with the slaves all freed and giving faithful service for wages. Staying so much apart and living in her own rose-colored dreams, the strenuous enthusiasms of the recent months, even her immediate surroundings, seemed to lose their reality. The same emotional force in her character which enabled her to enter with such zeal into the anti-slavery work and to be so absorbed by it that she could sacrifice her love

upon its altar made it possible now,—indeed, made it inevitable,—when she had once given up to the opposing influence, that she should be swept by its forceful current to the other extreme.

A new expression came into her face. Her dreams drew a soft and tender veil across the usually intent and serious look of her eyes, and all her countenance glowed with her inner happiness. Her mother saw the change in expression and demeanor with inward delight. For when it came to the affections Mrs. Ware was able to interpret her daughter's feelings and actions with more surety than in matters of the mind and conscience.

Charlotte, in whose heart rankled resentment against her father and sister for their anti-slavery views, their Underground work, and the reproach that had been administered to her, noted the new look on Rhoda's face and said bitterly to herself: "Yes, I suppose she's getting hold of a whole pack of niggers to steal and send on to Canada!" She told herself petulantly that she was no longer of any consequence in their home and began to feel an angry sense of injury at the bonds tacitly imposed upon her conduct by the ideas and actions of her father and sister. She longed for some happening that would take her away and put her into surroundings where she could feel her accustomed sense of freedom and personal importance.

And so, the wish being father to the conviction, Charlotte felt every day more and more sure

that Jefferson Delavan would soon reappear, that Rhoda would refuse him again, and that then she could capture his repulsed heart and speedily win from him a proposal of marriage. She would hold him off a little while, and make him all the more eager—that would be easy enough—and when at last she did consent, he would of course want an early marriage, and to that, too, she would reluctantly consent—“Oh, the sooner the better,” her thoughts broke into sudden storm, “so that I can get away from this black abolition hole!”

Dr. Ware observed with surprise the look upon his daughter’s face and the change in her manner. He felt the lessening of her ardor in their mutual interests and was not slow to attribute her silence, her drawing away from the life of the household and her self-absorbed, dreamlike demeanor to its true cause.

“Something has happened,” he said to himself, “that, for the time being, has made her give up the struggle against her heart, and, like a river that has burst through its dam, her love is overflowing everything else in her nature. Well, I’m glad Delavan isn’t here now, and I hope her conscience will get its head above water again before she sees him. The good Lord grant that something happens to bring her back to herself before it’s too late!”

But he said nothing to his daughter, faithfully

observing the pledge he had made to his wife at their recent reconciliation. Nor did he and Mrs. Ware speak to each other about it, although it was uppermost in both their thoughts. The renewed tenderness between them was too sacred for either to dare the risk of marring its bloom by even so much as an allusion to a subject upon which they were so widely divided.

On the fourth day of her surrender Rhoda sat at her window reading a letter from her friend, Julia Hammerton. Her active spirit was beginning to bestir itself again and as she finished the epistle she stretched her arms above her head and with a little frown remembered that she had that morning neglected one of her usual duties. Then, "Dear me," she exclaimed, "I've forgotten all about that for— Oh, it must be several days! I suppose mother has attended to it," she rebuked herself, and then smiled tenderly at the sunshine which filled all her inner consciousness.

"I've been very happy, these days," she thought, "but I'm afraid I've been awfully lazy and selfish too. I must go down now and get to work."

She looked out of the window and saw Horace Hardaker and the elder Kimball, father of Walter and Lewis, coming up the hill. Her thought reverted to the missive from Horace's sister.

"I'll take Julia's letter down and read it to them. There's such a lot of news from Kansas in it that will interest them. Dear Julia! Horace

ought to be proud of her—and he is, I know. She's been so brave and so true!"

The hint of a shadow crossed her face as she looked absently at the letter in her hand. From somewhere far back in her mind seemed to come a faint question, Had she also been true? But she lifted her head proudly with the quick answering thought:

"Of course I am true. I shall not change my convictions the least little bit, even if I do marry Jeff. And perhaps I can do more good as his wife than I could in any other way."

"As the mistress of slaves!" came back the accusing whisper.

In the office she found her father and the two others deeply engrossed in conversation, their looks anxious and gloomy, but their manner showing excitement.

"Come in, Rhoda," said Dr. Ware, as she hesitated at the door, "and hear the bad news."

"Bad news! Oh, father, what is it?"

"The Supreme Court has decided the Dred Scott case and the result is even worse than we have feared. Chief Justice Taney has dragged his official robes through slavery filth and given to the pro-slaveryites everything they want!"

"Oh, father—Horace! What does he say?"

"The decision is," answered Hardaker, "that a slave cannot be a citizen—practically, that a nigger has no rights a white man is bound to re-

spect—that Congress has no right to prohibit slavery in the territories, and that therefore the Missouri Compromise is unconstitutional and void.”

“It knocks the very breath out of the Republican party,” added Dr. Ware. “Its existence is based on the effort to get Congress to forbid slavery in the territories. So, now—where is it? Where are we?”

“We are done for, all of us,” said Kimball, in hopeless tones. “It has knocked the footing from under the whole anti-slavery fight. It binds us hand and foot, and it looks now as if we might as well stop fighting.”

“Oh, no, Mr. Kimball!” Rhoda exclaimed. “Don’t say that! We must keep on fighting as long as there’s one of us left!”

“She’s right, Kimball!” said Dr. Ware, his glance resting for a moment upon his daughter’s face. She looked up in some confusion at having broken in so abruptly, and met his eyes. Cool and clear, they seemed to be looking into her very heart and down in their gray depths as they turned away she felt rather than saw a gleam of gratification. The hot blood flushed her face, and conscience, that had just now barely stirred under its rose-leaf coverlet, roused and began to tell her that she too must keep on fighting. Had her father guessed how near she had been to deserting their cause, she wondered.

"Yes, she's right," Dr. Ware was repeating, with a thump of his fist on the table. "We've got to find standing ground somewhere, and somehow keep up the fight!"

"Their next step will be to reopen the slave trade—they're demanding that already," Kimball went on. "And then we shall have once more all the horrors of the slave ships sheltered under the law and people taught to regard the traffic as right because it is legal."

"Yes," broke in Hardaker, "that's the worst of these legalized wrongs—the way they debauch the consciences of people. Look at the way the northern Democrats are defending the right of property in slaves! A few years ago they admitted slavery was wrong, but said it was here and so we must make the best of it. Now they say it is all right and must be protected and are tumbling over one another in their eagerness to give the South everything she wants!"

"Well, this decision gives her everything she wants now, and opens the door for her to take anything else she may want later."

Kimball's thin old hands were clenched together and his gray-bearded face was sad with the hopelessness of age. For thirty years he had been fighting with all his strength in the cause of the slave and he had seen the anti-slavery sentiment grow from the conviction of a mere handful of people to the determination of a mighty multitude.

And now, when at last it seemed as if they had almost reached the point where at least the thing could be penned up in small space and its political power taken from it, now had come this deadly blow, to nullify every effort they could make.

Rhoda knew what long years of endeavor and sacrifice he had spent in the anti-slavery cause and how ardent had been his hope that he might live to see slavery ended and the whole country made free. She watched him now, her cheeks flushing and her heart responding with full sympathy to the grief and despair that filled his breast.

"If Congress," he went on bitterly, "must recognize and defend the master's right to his slave wherever he takes him, then there can be no hindrance to slavery in any part of this country, and Toombs and Davis and all the rest of them can yet call the roll of their slaves in the shadow of Bunker Hill monument, or any place else they wish. That, my friends, is what this decision means!"

His voice trembled and Rhoda saw in his eyes the tears of an old man whose dearest hope had come to naught. She was conscious of a remorseful shame, as though she herself had been in some measure responsible for his grief and despair. For had she not, was her swift, self-accusing thought, been ready to compromise with this monster?

"No, no, Mr. Kimball, you mustn't give up like that," Hardaker was exclaiming, "not while there's one of us left to die fighting. And the



election last fall showed that there are more than a million of us, who at least are ready to help. Rhoda's got the right idea," and he looked at her with smiling approval.

Again she blushed and turned her eyes away, feeling acutely that she did not deserve this praise and miserably wondering if they would despise her were she to tell them that she had been willing, only an hour before, to become a slaveholder's wife.

"It seem to me," Horace went on, "that we've got to go right on with the popular propaganda against slavery. Why, this very decision of Chief Justice Taney—it's so atrocious and inhuman, it will be the best campaign document we've ever had. We ought to circulate it by the thousand! I'm not sure, friends, but it will be a good thing for us, in the long run!"

Dr. Ware smiled slightly. He was accustomed to the enthusiasm with which Hardaker, in a dozen sentences, could convince himself of the truth of a proposition which, five minutes before, he would have flouted. Nevertheless, this idea appealed to him.

"There's a good deal in that, Horace," he acquiesced, "and I think we'd better take it up in the Rocky Mountain Club. But while we're appealing to the northern voters we mustn't forget the South. We must extend and increase our Underground work, because it is making slave property most pre-

carious all along the border states. The more slaves we can run off the more uncertain the whole institution becomes, and the more angry we make the South—and there's nothing irritates them so much as this—the sooner the crisis will come. War is the only possible solution of this problem, friends. So I say, let's bring on the crisis as soon as possible, and fight it out!"

At that moment there was a knock at the office door and a request for Dr. Ware's services in another part of the town. The two visitors went down the hill again and Rhoda, invited by the bright sunshine, strolled down the veranda and across the yard to the grape arbor. She wanted to be alone and think matters over, find where she stood and allay the turmoil between her heart and her conscience.

As she walked down the path she saw that Jim was already making preparations for the spring. This great bed was to be filled again with white petunias—they had liked it so much last year. Again she seemed to sense their odor, as on that June night, and to hear a voice vibrant with tones of love. No, she could not think here,—her heart would not let her. She turned away and hurried to her room. But there too every inch of space was like a seductive voice calling to her with the memories of the last few days. With a sudden grip upon herself—a quick indrawing of breath and a pressure of teeth upon her lip, the outward

signs of the inner process of taking herself in hand—she went deliberately downstairs and out into the woodshed.

There she sat down upon a chunk of wood and faced the little room, with its door heedlessly exposed and open, just as the marshal had left it. The sight stung her, as she had known it would, with an accusation of apostasy. But her spirit rose up quickly in self-defense.

“No, I didn’t desert our cause, even in thought,” she declared to herself. “I’m not so bad as that, I hope. I only thought I could marry Jeff and still help it along. But I’m afraid I couldn’t. Yes, I know what mother said, and for a little while it did seem possible—just because I wanted it so much, I suppose. But mother and I are so different. I couldn’t be in the midst of things that I thought were wrong without trying to make them right. Jeff would free his slaves if I asked him to—I’m sure he would.”

She lingered over the thought a moment and a fond smile curved her lips. “Yes, I’m sure he would, and I wouldn’t have to be a mistress of slaves. But that isn’t the whole of it. He told me once, and it’s been in all his letters, how wrapped up he is in the interests of the South. And that means slavery. It’s his own section and what they think are their rights, against all the rest of us and against freedom, and eternal right, and the upward progress of the world. We’d still be just

as much divided and opposed to each other as ever."

The memory returned to her of her father sitting at his desk, his face drawn with sadness and sadness in his voice, as she had seen him on that evening in the previous autumn when she had asked if her mother could not be told what they were doing. She shivered a little.

"No, I shouldn't like to think of my husband feeling like that, knowing that he couldn't tell me of his dearest hopes and plans and ambitions, and feel sure of my sympathy. No, that wouldn't be being married, really married."

A little longer she sat with her chin in her hand and stared at the open door of the tiny room. Her face gradually took on a stern expression that made it, notwithstanding its youthful smoothness, curiously like her father's.

"No," she said aloud as she rose, "it can't be. It's just as impossible still as it has been all the time—even if I did think for a little while—"

Her face suddenly melted into tenderness and her voice sank to a whisper. "It was a lovely dream while it lasted, and I'm glad—it didn't do anybody, not even me, any harm, and I'm glad—yes, I'm glad—I had it!" The little lines at the corners of her mouth deepened, her upper lip lifted, and her flashing smile lit up her countenance and shone in her eyes. "It's almost like looking back on having been married for a little while!" she thought.

## CHAPTER XVIII

"Rhoda," called Mrs. Ware from the veranda steps, "will you come here, please?"

Rhoda was standing between the rows of lilac that hedged the walk to the front gate, inspecting the swelling buds and saying to herself with pleasure that they looked as if they would bloom early that year. The lilac was her best-loved flower and these two lines of bushes had been planted because of her pleading, ten years before. Every season she watched anxiously for the buds to show sign of returning life, and Charlotte declared that after they began to swell she measured them with a tape line every day to mark their growth. When they bloomed she kept bowls of the flowers all over the house and was rarely without a spray in her hair or her dress.

Mrs. Ware noted that her daughter's step was not as brisk as usual and saw that the glow was gone from her face, while into her eyes had come a look of wistfulness. Believing she knew the cause, she longed to take the girl in her arms and say, "Don't worry, dear. He'll be here soon, I'm sure, for I wrote to him to come." But she thought it best to keep her own secrets and so what she said was:

"Mrs. Winston has just sent word that little Harriet is worse and she wants your father to come at once. He's not likely to be back here before noon. So I want you to drive me over to their house and then take the message to your father—I know where he is—so he can stop there before he comes home. Get ready at once, honey. I've told Jim to harness up, and I've only to put on my bonnet."

Charlotte watched them as they drove down the hill, thinking discontentedly, "Mother doesn't care half as much about me as she does about Rhoda. She'd just give her eyes to have Rhoda marry Jeff, and she never shows the least interest that way in me. I don't believe she'd care if I was to be an old maid. An old maid! Oh, la! Well, I'm not going to, and I'll not marry anybody in Hillside, either."

Looking rather pleased with herself at this ultimatum she sauntered into the house and the notes of the "Battle of Prague" were soon resounding through the silent rooms. But the clanging of the knocker at the front door presently crashed them into discord. A moment later she crossed the hall into the parlor, whither Lizzie had shown Jefferson Delavan, thinking:

"What good luck there's nobody at home but me! I wish Rhoda had refused him again first. Well, I'll tell him she's going to."

A twinkle of amusement came now and then

into Delavan's eyes as he watched the airs and graces, the sidelong glances, and all the dainty feminine tricks of movement and gesture and poise with which Charlotte accompanied her conversation. It was not her physical habit ever to remain quietly seated, or even in the same position for more than a few minutes. Her restless spirits, her active body and her native vivacity of manner combined to keep her in motion almost as incessant and quite as unconscious as that of a bird flitting about in a tree. Although she did not know it this habit was one of her most charming characteristics. She had a certain dignity of carriage, like her mother's, which made itself manifest, notwithstanding her absurdly large hoopskirt, and this, with her grace of action and of posture, made her movements always pleasing to look at, while her bird-like flights gave an elusiveness to her manner that enhanced her charm.

She saw the admiration in Delavan's face as his eyes followed her, and tilted her skirts in a way that would have scandalized her mother, although she observed that her companion seemed not at all dismayed by the glimpses of slender foot and ankle that she made possible. That occasional twinkle of amusement she took as a tribute to her gayety and laughed and chattered all the more.

"Has your true heart been pining, Miss Charlotte?" he presently asked in a quizzical tone, as

he leaned upon the back of her chair, looking down smilingly into her pretty, upturned face.

She flushed a little, but made wide eyes at him and said, "What do you mean?"

"Oh, I was given to understand that some hearts in Hillside are in a rather bad way. Is yours true and does it pine?"

She made a graceful little gesture and turned upon him with a merry face and a look distinctly provocative: "Suppose it was, either or both, what would it matter to you?"

She looked up at him, smiling, with saucy lips and inviting eyes, and before she knew what he was doing he had slipped an arm around her waist and lifted her to her feet. She struggled to free herself, but he held her against his breast, pushed back her head and kissed her squarely upon the lips, once, twice, and thrice. With her hands against his chest she tried to push him away and struggled to turn her face from his. But she was helpless in his grasp until he released her.

"You brute!" she exclaimed, dashing the angry tears from her eyes. "How dare you!"

He leaned against the back of the chair, hand in pocket, and laughed indulgently. "Didn't you want me to? It looked that way."

"Of course I didn't," she stormed. "You're a horrid thing, and I hate you!"

"Well, I'm glad to know you didn't. It's much better that you were only pretending."



"How do you think Rhoda will take it, when I tell her? And I shall!"

"Oh, tell her if you like. But how do *you* think she will take your trying to persuade a kiss from her lover?"

Her eyes blazed angrily and she stamped her foot, but said nothing.

"Never mind, little sister," he went on, patting her shoulder. "I was only giving you a lesson, and it's much better to keep such things in the family. Remember after this that if you ask a man so plainly to kiss you he's very likely to do it."

"Don't call me 'sister,' you horrid thing! I'm not!" she exclaimed, turning away.

"I hope you will be some day."

"I won't! Rhoda isn't going to marry you!"

"So she's told me a number of times!" and he laughed again, an easy, happy, self-satisfied laugh.

She faced about, curiosity in her heart. Had something happened without her knowledge? Would he seem so sure, would he wear openly that look of confident love if Rhoda had not accepted him? The imp of mischief stirred once more in her breast. She moved a step nearer.

"Say, do you know, Jeff, that's the first time a man ever kissed me!"

"You've had better luck than you deserve, little sister."

"If you're so much in love with Rhoda what did you want to do it for?"

"Why did you look as if you wanted me to if you didn't?"

"I didn't look that way!"

"Oh, didn't you? Then my previous observations have been at fault. Perhaps I thought I'd like to find out why you sent me that anonymous letter. At first I thought you meant it as a hint for Rhoda's sake. But after you'd been five minutes in this room it seemed to me that you were taking very queer means for advancing her interests. If you had unfortunately fallen in love with me yourself it wouldn't have been quite so bad. But you haven't, little sister, you haven't. You'd have wanted me to kiss you again if you had."

"You're a horrid brute, that's what you are, and I hate you!"

"I'm sorry to hear it, for I've always liked you, and you're Rhoda's sister. But I hope you'll remember that treachery isn't a nice thing, in either love or war."

She moved uncertainly toward the door and, glancing through the window, saw her sister drive past the front gate. "There's Rhoda!" she exclaimed, casting back at him a fiery glance. "I shall tell her just the sort of man you are!" But she did not forget to give her hoopskirt an extra tilt as she dashed out. Delavan, noting it, smiled as he followed her to the door and cast a glance

after her figure, hurriedly retreating up the stairs.

Rhoda did not know that Jeff was there until she came into the hall through the office and saw him standing in the parlor door. "Sweetheart!" he called in low tones, and moved toward her, with outstretched hand. A glad light came into her face at sight of him, but she stood still and did not speak, until he was at her side.

"Don't, Jeff! When I have told you so many times it can't be!" she pleaded, and drew away from him as he would take her in his arms.

"I know, dearest! But it's different now, when I know what you really want!"

She turned so that he could not see her face and asked with a sort of gasp, "What do you mean?"

If he could have seen her countenance as she stood with face averted, finger on lip, listening breathlessly for his reply, nothing would have prevented him from seizing her in his arms and doing as she had begged in the letter she had not meant him to see. For it glowed with love and trembled upon surrender and shone with gladness that he knew her inmost heart.

"Ah, Rhoda Ware, I know your secret now!" He was bending near her, his hands hovering over her, but still he would not touch her while she seemed unwilling. "I know, now, how much you love me, and how ready at last you are to give up to your heart. Come then, dear one, or I shall surely do as you bade me in your letter!"

A sudden stiffening and shrinking in her attitude made him fall back a step and look at her anxiously. Slowly, very slowly, she turned, lifting her head, until she faced him. And slowly the love-light and the trembling nearness to surrender faded out of her countenance and left it drawn with the effort by which she had forced herself once more to the point of denial, with lips compressed and gray eyes steely with resolution.

"Jeff," she began, and her voice was unsteady, "it's not fair to either of us that you saw what I wrote. I didn't mean to put that into my letter—I wrote it out only because my heart ached so and it seemed some relief. But I thought I'd burned it. I'm sorry it got mixed in with the other sheets. But it was a mistake, and you'll forgive me, won't you, dear Jeff, and you won't feel that it was a promise?"

Her voice fell away into pleading tones and she stood hesitating, poised, as if wishing him to stand aside and let her pass. With instinctive deference he stepped aside and she moved quickly to the foot of the stairs. But he sprang after her and seized her hand, exclaiming, as he drew her into the parlor, "No, Rhoda! I shall not let you ruin both our lives and break both our hearts, after that glimpse you gave me of yours!"

She steadied herself for the struggle she knew must come, and suddenly felt her nerves grow firm and her brain clear, as they always did when she

faced great need. She was calmer than he and more mistress of herself as she said:

"I can't say anything different to what I've always said, and said in that letter, that I feel to the bottom of my heart that slavery is such a wrong, such a curse, such a horrible thing that I can't marry you because you believe in it and are a part of it."

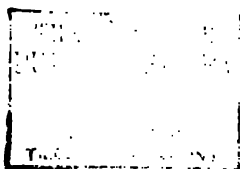
He gazed at her silently a moment, and the love in his face, that had but just now been more of the body than of the soul, was transfused with admiration of her spirit. "And you can still say that to me," he marveled in hushed accents, "after your heart has ached as it must have when you wrote those lines?"

She dropped her eyes lest he see the sudden start of tears. It was a subtle undermining of her defenses, had he known it, thus to cease demanding and reveal such understanding and sympathy. Of such sort was her ideal love, and it hurt more than ever to put it from her. One hand was pressed against her heart, as if she could thus lessen the physical pain, and she said piteously, "It's aching now, Jeff!"

He looked at her irresolutely. Her drooping figure, her averted face, her trembling voice—they were all such a plea of weakness to strength, of feminine trust to masculine power to help, that even if he had not loved her the impulse to take her in his arms and comfort her would have been



“‘Don’t, Jeff, please don’t!’ She pleaded.”



well-nigh overpowering. But he knew not what unexpected visage her spirit might next reveal and he had already learned that, although the primitive woman in her might call loudly one moment, in the next the civilized woman would thrust her into her cave and in dignity and strength stand guard at the door. For a moment he wavered, then with clenched hands turned on his heel and walked across the room, exclaiming:

“And you won’t let me stop it, you won’t let me comfort you!” Then he faced about and as his eyes fell again upon her, he cried, “By heaven, I will!” And he sprang toward her.

But already she had gathered up her resolution once more and it was the civilized woman, not to be won save with her own consent, who moved aside and eluded the embrace with which he would have swept her to his breast. He dropped on his knees at her feet and buried his face in her dress. A moment she stood with both hands clenched against her heart. Then she bent over him and laid them as softly upon his head as a compassionate mother might have done.

“Don’t Jeff, please don’t!” she pleaded. “It’s so hard already—don’t make it harder, for both of us. We’ll have to just recognize what is, and accept it.”

He rose again, seizing one of her hands as it fell from his head. “But what is, Rhoda, except that we love each other with such strength that



God who made us must have meant us to be husband and wife? What else is there that matters, beside that?"

"I've told you so often, dear, what it is that matters!"

"What do you want me to do, dear heart? I'll free my slaves, if you wish, and pay them wages."

Her face lighted and she smiled wistfully at him, but shook her head. "It's deeper than that, Jeff, deeper than just the ownership of a few slaves. I knew you would do that, for my sake. I told myself so—" she broke off, smiled fondly upon him, then laid her free hand upon the two already clasped.

"Listen, Jeff, let me tell you—I didn't intend to, but perhaps it's best. After I sent you that last letter, I had a sudden fear that I had put in the sheet I didn't mean you to see. It was only a second, and then I felt sure I had burned it. But for a little while I—I almost wished I had, and in my heart I said I would give up and that I would write you to come. It seemed as if you would know anyway, and as if you were coming, without my telling you. And for three or four days I sat at my window and watched for you and dreamed about our love, and about our life together at beautiful Fairmount—" she hesitated an instant and blushed faintly, but the true woman in her sent her on—"with our children growing

up around us, and we so happy and growing old together— Oh, Jeff, it was such a beautiful dream!”

“Not half so beautiful or happy as the reality would be, sweetheart! Oh, Rhoda, won’t you make it true!”

“We’d be happy for a while, dear, but we’d wake up, sooner or later, just as I did, and then we’d find out that there was no true marriage between us, and our happiness would end.”

Denial was in his face and voice as he quickly answered: “Never, Rhoda! I can’t believe it! Why should we waken? Why did you?”

“It was the Dred Scott decision.”

He smiled incredulously. “I suppose I would have anyway, after a little,” she went on, “if you hadn’t got here first—” and she smiled up at him ingenuously.

“O, how I wish I had! If it hadn’t been for that storm—”

“It’s better to wake up too soon than too late,” she broke in. “As soon as I knew about that decision and all that the chief justice had said, and understood how delighted the South is over it, and how it has saddened and discouraged all of us up here at the North who hate slavery, then I saw once more that I couldn’t compromise with my conscience, not the least little bit.”

“But, Rhoda, you won’t have to, if I free my slaves. . . . And I will!”

"I've thought that all out, and it wouldn't help us any—though I'd be glad for the slaves. Don't you see, Jeff, that if you should free them, still believing in slavery as you do, and still being devoted to the South and wanting with all your soul to further her interests, which you think are bound up in slavery—don't you see that after a while you would begin to feel that for my sake you had done something wrong, had been false to your own ideals? And I would know it and it would make me unhappy. I don't think, Jeff, that I'd want you to free your negroes, except as you might be convinced that it's wrong to keep them enslaved."

She stopped and looked up at him with her flashing smile. "I'll run every one of them off to freedom that I can get a chance to, but—"

He smiled back at her indulgently, and then they both laughed a little, glad of the relief from the high tension which had held them.

"Rhoda, you are such a dear girl!" he murmured fondly. Her hands were imprisoned, one in each of his, but he did not attempt to lessen the distance between them. The earthly side of their love was fading out of their mutual consciousness, for the moment, as their thoughts mounted to the things of the spirit.

"It's such a wide gulf between us, although we are so near," she went on. "Your letters have shown me that. To the bottom of your heart you

believe that all that the South is struggling for is right and good and is her just right and will be for the good of the world."

He threw back his head and his eyes shone. "I do, Rhoda," he exclaimed with emphasis. "I love the South, and her ideals are mine and her ambitions are mine! They are just and right and the more widely they are spread the better it will be for civilization and the whole world!"

She nodded. "Yes, I understand how you feel, though I didn't at first. And I believe to the bottom of my heart that the enslavement of man by man"—her face was glowing now with the inner fires of conviction and her low voice thrilled with the intensity of her feeling—"is wrong and degrades both of them and is the cause of no end of horrible things. And I don't believe that anything good can ever come out of it."

"But you don't know, Rhoda—you never have seen—" he began earnestly.

"Ah, but I have seen, Jeff," she broke in sadly. "I've seen the poor negroes that my father and I have helped on their way to Canada taking such desperate risks and enduring such awful sufferings in the hope of winning their freedom that I don't need to see anything else. Divided like that, dear, on a matter that goes so deep with both of us, there could be no real understanding and sympathy between us, no true marriage. I think your convictions and your ideals are wrong—they are hateful

to me—but I honor you for being true to them. I honor you more and love you more than I would if you gave them up, while you still believed in them, for love of me.”

“You are right, dear heart,” he said, the pain of baffled and hopeless love sounding in his voice. “I could not be false to my convictions and my principles, even for you, my sweet, any more than you could be false to yours. You make me understand, as I haven’t before, what this means to you.”

“No, Jeff, I can’t see that there’s any hope for us, for our happiness, on this earth, as long as this thing lasts that lies between us. Perhaps, in heaven—”

Their eyes met, and her voice trembled and ceased. They stood with hands clasped, looking through open windows into each other’s souls, gazing deep into the warm and lovely depths of love, which they were putting behind them, and turning their vision upward along the heights where material aims crumbled away and hope and aspiration became only the essence of the soul’s ideals. And as they gazed it seemed to them that somewhere up in that dim region of eternal truth their spirits met and were joined.

A faint sigh fluttered from Rhoda’s lips. With a start Delavan dropped her hands and sank upon the sofa beside them. His head bowed on his breast and a deep, shuddering breath, that was almost a sob, shook his body.

"I think I'll go now," said Rhoda tremulously.

"No, don't go. I want you beside me a little while. Sit down here. No, don't be afraid—give me your hand."

For a little space they sat in silence, like two children venturing into some unknown region and gaining courage by clasp of hands. At last he rose.

"I will leave you now, dear heart. But it's not good-by, even yet. I still believe that some time I shall call you wife. I'm proud to have won your love, Rhoda, prouder than of anything else I shall ever do."

He pressed her hand to his lips, bowed ceremoniously, and a moment later she was listening to the sound of his footsteps as he walked down the path to the gate.

## CHAPTER XIX

After the discovery of the hiding place in the woodshed, Dr. Ware and his Underground co-workers thought it best for a little while to receive no runaways in his house. For it was closely watched, not only by the officers whose duty it was to enforce the Fugitive Slave law, but also by the slave hunters who made it a business to trail and capture northward-bound chattels for the sake of the rewards offered by their owners. In order to divert suspicion Walter and Lewis Kimball and several other young men who were in the habit of keeping a lookout for the fugitives contrived to secrete them elsewhere until surveillance upon the white house on the hilltop was relaxed.

In the meantime Dr. Ware made ready a new place of concealment. An end of the cellar extending beneath the room occupied by the two black servants was separated from the rest by a solid wall. A trap door was cut in the floor and a flight of stairs set in. Carpet concealed the door and over it was usually set a table, chairs, or other furniture. The cellar room was dark and had little ventilation, but Dr. Ware and Rhoda con-

gratulated themselves that it would be perfectly safe.

"Why, father, it's like a dungeon in a castle," the girl exclaimed with a laughing face as she came up after making it ready with pallets and cots and a generous supply of old quilts and blankets. "While they are shut up in there they can rest and sleep, and so can we, without the least fear that they'll be discovered!"

Dr. Ware cast an observant look at her alert and smiling countenance. Not since the adventure with the marshal had she seemed so like her usual self. Following those self-absorbed days, when she had seemed to be going about in a happy dream, had come a period of depression. His professional eye had noted that she did not eat as a healthy young creature should and his fatherly solicitude had made him quickly conscious of her lessened vivacity of spirit. The changes in her demeanor cost him a good deal of anxious thought—much more, indeed, than she supposed he ever bestowed upon her. He knew that Jefferson Delavan had been there again, but Rhoda told him nothing of what had passed between them. So he merely guessed that his daughter had struggled once more with her heart and had paid dearly for the victory.

He watched her anxiously, but shrank from speaking to her about her physical state because he felt sure of its emotional cause and could fore-



see the trend the conversation would take. For the leading-strings of habit were strong upon them both, and even stronger was the constraint of self-consciousness in a middle-aged man who all his life had cultivated the intellectual side of his nature at the expense of the emotional. Only toward the wife who had woven so strong a mesh about his heart in the days when the blood of young manhood was hot and winey and, in different scope and color, toward the child who so much resembled her, had he ever been able to express in words and actions the inner warmth and tenderness of his heart.

Of Rhoda he made a companion much more than he did of either his wife or Charlotte. When she settled down at home after the three years she had spent, in her latter teens, at Dr. Scott's Female Institute, he had been much pleased to find that he could talk with her seriously upon most subjects that interested him. And since then they had grown into a deep and wide intellectual understanding and sympathy. But between them there was no emotional expression of their mutual feeling.

During this last year he had watched with pride her rapid development in character and intellect. Her Underground work had stimulated her sympathies and trained her in self-reliance and her increased interest in political affairs had broadened and developed her intellectually until, from an

attractive girl of rather more than average endowment she had become a woman whose companionship her father enjoyed upon an equal footing. Blind babies, if the windows of sense perception are not opened into their minds, become imbecile. Perhaps—but everybody knows that argument by analogy is the most deceptive of all the paths by which human beings endeavor to find truth.

So, to go back to Rhoda and the new place of concealment in the cellar. Dr. Ware was much gratified to see her more lively demeanor that morning and began to hope that, with the renewal of their Underground operations and the constant call they would make upon both heart and head, she would soon forget the pain that had been numbing her energies. She told him she was going to a meeting of the sewing circle that afternoon at which they were to consider the question of enlarging its sphere and turning it into an anti-slavery society. He thought it a good idea and encouraged her to do all she could toward that end.

She went early to Mrs. Hardaker's house, where the meeting was to be held, and proved to be the first arrival. Horace was there, not having yet returned to his office after dinner, and as she entered he greeted her with—

“Rhoda, here's a grand thing! Just listen!”

She saw that he had the New York “Tribune” in his hands, and as he began to read her attention

was at once absorbed by the bitter and mournful eloquence of Horace Greeley's lament over the Dred Scott decision—a bit of literature that ought to be among the classics of American journalism and studied by every aspirant for its honors. But it is buried too deep among the yellowing sheets of forgotten newspaper files to be known, in these busy days of a later generation, to any but an occasional investigator. It had its own brief day of vigorous life, when it stirred profoundly the minds and hearts of tens upon tens of thousands of earnest men and women. And then like a dead leaf it fluttered down to earth, to become a part of that débris of the centuries that makes a richer soil for the growth of human souls.

With quickening pulse Rhoda listened to the stately march of the sentences, as Hardaker's fluent, oratorical voice gave to each its full significance. As he came to the closing lines his listener's breath was catching now and then and her eyes and cheeks were aflame:

“The star of freedom and the stripes of bondage are henceforth one. American republicanism and American slavery are in the future to be synonymous. This, then, is the final fruit. In this all the labors of our statesmen, the blood of our heroes, the lifelong cares and toils of our forefathers, the aspirations of our scholars, the prayers of good men, have finally ended. America the slave breeder and slaveholder!”

As Hardaker looked up and saw her countenance aglow with the fires of her soul it occurred to him that, after all, Rhoda Ware was beautiful. Like the tuned strings of a musical instrument her emotional nature had responded to the touch upon her convictions, and behind this mingled glow of indignation and aspiring soul he felt all the forces of her woman's heart, her powers of loving, her wealth of compassion and tenderness. As he left the house he muttered to himself:

"A girl like that—she ought to be a Joan of Arc!" For the first time in his rather long and somewhat spasmodic suit for her heart hope of final success almost fell away from him. If such a rare, fine creature mated at all, he felt rather than put into definite thought, it surely ought to be with some being of finer clay than the average man. And then he jammed his hat down hard and said to himself, definitely and savagely: "The idea of her marrying a damned slaveholder!" Horace Hardaker was a church member in good standing, and it was only in the intimacy of his soul and upon most infrequent occasions that he allowed himself such lapses of speech. When he did it was a sure sign that his indignation had a strong personal tang.

The band of women in Mrs. Hardaker's parlor talked while they sewed, discussing the proposition of turning themselves into a more ambitious society. Some were averse, saying they already

did as much as they could and that, moreover, to venture outside the sphere of their homes and attempt to do things that men could do better would not be a proper and becoming course. Rhoda, stitching busily, now and then put in an argument or answered an objection. Her ardor, pleasant demeanor, and practical capacity had made her a favorite with all the members of the society, old and young. Her unfortunate love affair, of which all of them knew something, invested her with a romantic interest and set her a little apart, because of her opportunity and her sacrifice.

Of a sudden Rhoda felt her heart swell with the desire for utterance. She began speaking, at first with her needle still busy. But, after the first two or three sentences, her work dropped from her hands and she leaned forward, her face glowing, as she dwelt upon the discouragement which had fallen upon all who hoped for either the ending or the staying of the progress of slavery, and of the greater need than ever before that every one who believed slavery to be an evil should work against it with zeal. She spoke quietly and simply, with the intense and moving earnestness of a strong personality in the grip of a passionate conviction. One after another the women dropped their needles and listened with rapt attention. For a few minutes she talked and then she caught up the paper and read the article in the "Tribune." At its close

the utter silence of the room was broken only by a half-suppressed sob here and there. After a moment she said modestly:

“Well, friends, what are we going to do about this matter?”

A woman in the back of the room began clapping her hands softly, and presently Rhoda was shrinking back, blushing and abashed, before the storm of applause. Immediately and enthusiastically, and perhaps not in strict accord with parliamentary rules, it was decided to change their circle into a “Female Anti-Slavery Society,” to continue their present work and to add to it whatever their hands might find to do, and to make Rhoda Ware its president. Surprised and embarrassed, she tried to decline the honor. But the women, crowding around her with praise and caresses, would not let her refuse.

At home she said nothing of the affair to her mother or sister, to neither of whom did she ever make mention of any of her anti-slavery activities. All that portion of her life, which, indeed, had come to be the major part, had as little community with them as if there had been between them no bond of love and use and relationship. To her father she related the bare facts of the occasion. But he soon heard from Horace Hardaker, whose mother had told him all about it, a full and enthusiastic account of what had taken place.

Rhoda grieved much over the growing aliena-

tion between herself and her mother and sister. Charlotte held herself plainly aloof, and Rhoda was puzzled by an evident resentment in her attitude. She did not know that Charlotte held her responsible for her own failure to capture the fancy of Jefferson Delavan.

"She's no right to keep him dangling after her if she doesn't intend to marry him," was the vexed young woman's summing up of the situation, having quite decided that if her sister would only move out of the way she herself would soon be mistress of Fairmount.

As the spring and summer went by Mrs. Ware's hope for a marriage between Jeff and Rhoda dwindled into profound disappointment. A sadness came into her face and voice that smote her daughter to the heart. The sick-headaches, to which she had long been subject, became more frequent, and other ailments began to manifest themselves. Fearing remorsefully that her anti-slavery work and her refusal to marry Delavan were at the bottom of her mother's failing health, the girl strove in all tender, care-taking ways of which she could think to make amends for the double hurt and disappointment. In the conduct of the house Mrs. Ware leaned upon her more than ever. But as the months wore on Rhoda felt keenly that the old tenderness and intimacy between them were disappearing.

The warm weather brought much increase of

Underground traffic. At that time and during the years immediately following the work of the Road was at its height. For its operations there were friends, money, workers in plenty, and slaves were gathered up even before they reached the free state border, and hurried on from hand to hand in such secrecy and safety that they had hardly a care or a responsibility until they found themselves secure on British soil.

To Rhoda her father gave over most of the care of the fugitives upon their arrival and while they were secreted in the cellar. Not infrequently also she drove them on to the next station, sometimes in the night, sometimes by day, in a spring wagon with a false bottom which he had bought for this purpose. Occasionally Chad Wallace appeared in the neighborhood with his peddler's wagon at their service, if it did not already contain its complement of hidden chattels. Now and then farmer Gilbertson, on a trip to town, hauled back some "baggage" well concealed in his wagon bed, to be stowed away in his hollow haystack until it could be sent on to the next station. A man who had a market garden out on the same road and drove back and forth a good deal with vegetables for the Hillside market and for steamboat supplies, and another who traveled about ostensibly selling reeds often carried black passengers.

With hands and head and heart all so full Rhoda found little time to spend in thinking of her



own unhappiness. Nevertheless, the day never went by that had not a little space saved out from other things and held apart for thought of her lover. Now and then a letter passed between them. But from these missives was dropped all mention of both slavery and love, although on both sides the correspondence breathed a sense of mutual tenderness and understanding that amounted to a sort of spiritual intimacy. To Rhoda these letters were the treasure of her heart. They were read over and over again, held caressingly in her hands during the brief minutes of each day when she gave herself up to thought of him, and kept under her pillow or upon her breast while she slept. Every night, when she knelt at her bedside, her petitions to the Heavenly Father begged for His blessing upon her efforts in behalf of the slaves, pleaded that He would soon put forth His hand and make an end of slavery, and implored the safety and the happiness of her lover.

In the late summer there came a message from Fairmount. Emily Delavan, Mrs. Ware's namesake, was to be married in October and the Ware family was bidden to the festivities. The news set Charlotte upon the borders of ecstatic delight. The visit, which was to be prolonged through several weeks, would not only be filled with no end of alluring pleasures and amusements, but it should open, she decided at once, the door of escape from her home into more congenial surroundings. It

would be just the sort of environment,—a gay crowd of people with nothing to do but enjoy themselves—in which she knew she always appeared to best advantage. Two or three uninterrupted weeks of it, with Jefferson Delavan always there to feel the effects of her charms, and she could be quite sure of the result. But—there was Rhoda.

“If she’s there,” Charlotte grumbled to herself, “she’ll just keep on making Jeff think she’s going to marry him some day, and have him dangling after her all the time.”

Why should Rhoda want to go at all, if she really meant to play fair with Jeff? The girl soon came to the conclusion, with which she promptly acquainted her sister, that the other ought not to attend the wedding.

“It will be very unkind to me if you insist on going, Rhoda,” she complained. “It will spoil all my pleasure.”

“Sister! Why do you say that?”

“Because you’ll keep Jeff hanging around you all the time, just as he does when he’s here. Somehow you manage to make him think that you’re going to marry him sometime when you know you don’t intend to at all. It isn’t fair to me, Rhoda, you know it isn’t.”

Rhoda had already begun to plan ways and means by which her duties and responsibilities could be cared for during her absence, for she wished much to make the visit. Her youthful

spirit, so much neglected and denied of late, was asserting itself once more and eagerly anticipating the new experience and the promised social gaieties. But above all she wished to go in order that she might be with her lover in his own home, and afterward be able to picture his daily life more vividly in her thought.

"You're not being fair to me now, Charlotte," she replied. "I've told Jeff over and over that I can't marry him. And I'm sure I don't want to hinder him from marrying any one else, if he wants to."

"Then be as good as your word, Rhoda, and stay away from where he is. He's attentive enough to me when you're not around, and if you'll just give me a fair chance—you'll see—I'll come back engaged!"

Rhoda threw up her head and answered, with a calm intensity in her tone that made Charlotte look at her curiously: "Very well. I'll stay at home. I've no claim on Jeff, and you can do whatever you like."

Charlotte flew across the room, threw her arms around Rhoda's neck, kissed her and declared she was a "dear old thing." And Rhoda, warming in response and comforted a little for her own hurt, smiled with pleasure at this outburst of affection, returned her caresses and called her "silly little sister."

"You can be an old maid if you want to and spend your life working for niggers," Charlotte exclaimed, dancing about the room, "but I mean to have a good time and make the niggers work for me!" She stopped suddenly and with head on one side regarded Rhoda anxiously. "Will you promise," she broke out, "that you won't tell mother why you don't go?"

"Of course I won't tell her!"

"Nor anybody else?"

"No!"

"Good sister! Then I'll love you more than ever!"

When Rhoda declared, and her mother could not induce her to change her decision, that it would be impossible for her to go, the disappointment was so keen that it sent Mrs. Ware to bed with one of her severest headaches. Rhoda cared for her with all tenderness, and, in secret bitterness and tears that her mother must now think more hardly of her than she deserved, wished that Charlotte would offer to give back her promise. But she would not ask it of her sister, and to that young woman, in the height of girlish spirits, busy with the dressmaker and her own plans, there never occurred the faintest idea of making the offer.

Mrs. Ware knew, even before she tried, that she could not induce her husband to accept the hos-

pitality of a slave owner, and so, finally, it was only herself and her younger daughter who made the journey. As they were saying good-by Charlotte whispered to her sister:

“This time next year, Rhoda, I’ll be inviting you to Fairmount!”

## CHAPTER XX

Letters from Mrs. Ware and Charlotte told of much gaiety and of days that were an unceasing round of enjoyment. Charlotte wrote that it was "heaven upon earth" and that never before had she "even imagined how happy a girl could be." But in her mother's letters Rhoda detected a note of melancholy. Although at one with the life around her in memory, training, sympathy and belief, she yet seemed to feel herself an alien while in the midst of it and to be saddened by her own lack of complete accord.

"Poor mother!" thought Rhoda. "She loves father and me so much that she can't help feeling loyal to us with a part of her heart. Dear, dear mother!"

Moreover, Mrs. Ware was not well, and declared she would be glad to return home. She related briefly that Jeff and Emily had divided the estate, two thirds of which, according to their father's will, belonged to the brother. Emily had chosen some land and a number of slaves and, as her husband already has as many negroes as he needed, it was their intention to realize upon these at once and put the money into improvements upon his estate.

"They'll be sold 'down south,' I suppose," said Rhoda, as she read the letter aloud to her father.

"Very likely. Those big cotton, cane and rice plantations are an insatiable market for slaves. They can't get enough labor. That is why the South is so anxious to reopen the African slave trade. It's an open secret, which the North winks at, as it does at everything the South chooses to do, that the traffic is already going on. Since the Dred Scott decision there is nothing they stop at. It's a pity Chad Wallace or Alexander Wilson isn't in the neighborhood of Fairmount just now. If they were, Emily's husband wouldn't be able to make so many improvements!"

A few days later Dr. Ware called Rhoda into his office, anxiety in his demeanor. "I've just received this letter from Wilson," he exclaimed, "written in Louisville. See what he says:

"DEAR FRIEND WARE: Am sending you to-day by express one blackbird, a fine specimen, securely boxed. I was fortunate enough to secure a live one, as I knew you would find the specimen more interesting alive than dead.'"

"Father!" cried Rhoda, her eyes wide and horrified. "He's sent some one in a box! All the way from Louisville! Oh, we must see about it at once!"

"The letter was evidently written in great haste," Dr. Ware continued, "on a dirty scrap of paper and,—yes, it was mailed on the boat."

"Then the box came on the steamboat with the letter!"

"Yes, and will be at the express office now. Jim must take the spring wagon and go after it."

Rhoda waited in extreme anxiety for Jim's return, fearful lest the poor creature should be dead in the box. Even Dr. Ware showed a lessening of his usual calm. They said little to each other during the man's absence, but together made ready everything that might be necessary if the "black-bird" should be unconscious. They knew of more than one daring escape from slavery by similar methods. And they knew too of the recent release from a southern penitentiary, after an eight years' term, of a man who had been convicted of attempting to rescue a slave by this same means.

The box, short and narrow and looking hardly large enough to contain a human being, was hurried into Jim's room and the cover quickly removed. Within was the huddled figure of a woman, her knees drawn up to her chin, and all her body held in the close confines as tightly as in a vise. She did not move and when they spoke to her there was no answer.

"No, she's not dead," said Dr. Ware, his finger on her pulse. They lifted her out and restorative measures soon brought her back to consciousness. But she was ghastly pale and trembling from head to foot.

"You poor thing! You're safe now," Rhoda



soothed, patting her arm, as she began to sob hysterically. "We are your friends and we'll take care of you."

She was young and comely, perhaps one-fourth colored, with neither complexion nor features showing more than a faint trace of her negro heritage. Presently they were able to give her food and water, and a little later she told them her story. As she talked Rhoda sat beside her, clasping her hand and now and then patting her arm in sympathy and encouragement. Her speech was simple, but good, showing intelligence and some training.

"How did Mr. Wilson happen to send you in a box?" asked Dr. Ware.

"It was the only way. They had to get rid of me quick. I'd been sold to a trader from New Orleans and he'd brought me and a lot of others to Louisville to take us on the steamboat. I knew he'd paid a big price for me, and from that and the way he talked me over I knew what he'd bought me for. I made up my mind I'd rather die, or do anything. A chance happened to come, on the street in Louisville, as he was taking us to the boat, and in a crowd I give him the slip.

"I didn't know what I'd do or where I'd go, but I just hurried along down another street, and then I saw the man who'd been at master's plantation last year and told us about going to Canada if we wanted to try it."

"Yes—Mr. Wilson," Dr. Ware interrupted.

"I knew him right away, though he looked different, and I spoke to him and told him what I wanted. He said to follow him and we walked fast and turned up and down streets, and came to a free woman's house. But they'd followed us, and in two or three minutes they were at the door. The woman took me into the back room and told me to jump into that box. Then she put the cover down quick and went back and I heard the men go all round the house looking for me and they swore at the woman and told her they'd seen me come in and they'd watch the house and keep on searching it till they got me. Then the man—Mr. Wilson, you said?—spoke up right loud and said he couldn't wait any longer and would she have his clothes ready if he'd send for the box right away, 'cause he wanted to catch the boat for Cincinnati. I 'spected he meant me, and he did. She put a pillow in the box and some biscuits and a bottle of water, and cut a little hole in the side, so I could breathe.

"I thought I was gwine die in the box," the woman went on, again showing signs of hysteria, as memory of her experience returned. "It was such a little box I had to be all crunched up and I got awful pains, and sometimes it seemed as if I'd just have to scream right out. And then I'd think what would happen if I did, and I'd be caught and they'd flog me and send me—where they'd bought

me for, and then I'd bite hard on the pillow and keep still. And once the box was turned up so I was on my head till I knew I was gwine die in another minute, but they turned it down again and I didn't."

She stopped speaking, as long, nervous sobs shook her frame. The tears were streaming down Rhoda's face and her bosom was heaving as with trembling hands she administered the draught her father had prepared. Dr. Ware noted her agitation and admonished her gently to calm herself. The old fear of displeasing him by showing too much emotion quickly steadied her nerves. To distract her thoughts from the fugitive's harrowing experience he began to question the woman, as she grew quiet once more, about her life in slavery.

"You must have had a hard master to be willing to take such chances to gain your freedom."

"It was the trader I run away from, 'cause I knew what he'd bought me for. Master was a kind man."

"But he sold you."

"It wasn't master that sold us. He never does. It was Miss Emily, 'cause she married."

A chill struck to Rhoda's heart. Was her fate to be forever linked in this way with that of the slaves from Fairmount? She was glad her father did not even look at her as he passed, with apparent unconcern, to the logical next question:

"Who was your master?"

"Jefferson Delavan, of Fairmount, just beyond Lexington. He was a kind man and never sold any of the slaves. His mother, old mistress, was kind too, when she was alive, and she took pains with some of us. She was teaching me to be her maid. But Miss Emily's different. She's sold nearly all of us that fell to her share."

Dr. Ware stole an anxious glance at Rhoda. She was sitting at the bedside, with the woman's hand clasped in hers, her eyes straight in front, her lips pressed together and her face stern.

"It's hardly fair to make the blame personal," he ventured. She flashed up at him indignant eyes and her voice was bitter with scorn as she replied:

"But he allowed her to be sold, father, and for such a purpose!"

He hesitated, considering a temptation. In his daughter's present mood it would be easy to deepen this impulse of condemnation and so perhaps undermine her love for Delavan. But the next instant he told himself that it would not be fair. "The man has enough to answer for—let him at least have justice," was his thought.

Rhoda felt his calm eyes upon her, but she would not meet them. "You must remember," he was saying judicially, "that no man can be better than the system of which he is a part. It is quite possible that Delavan knew nothing of all

this, except that his sister chose certain slaves as her share. I don't know very much about him, but I think he's decent enough to have protested if he had known of this woman's fate. I also think it's most unlikely it would have done any good if he had. And there it is, Rhoda! No matter how well-intentioned an individual slaveholder may be, he is likely to be swept along any minute by his system into its worst abominations. Our indictment must always be against the system, not against individuals."

When Rhoda knelt at her bedside that night the look of scorn had faded from her countenance and in its place were tears. "Dear Father in Heaven," she prayed, "do not let Thy punishment fall upon him. He knows not what he does. His eyes are so blinded that he cannot see how evil these things are. Do not punish him, do not let Thy vengeance fall upon him, until his eyes are opened and he sees that they are evil. And grant, O God, I beg of Thee, grant me this, that I may make amends to this poor creature for his wrong. If Thy vengeance is ripe and can be stayed no longer, let it fall upon my head. Let me bear his punishment. But grant me first that I may save her."

The fugitive, whose name, Lear White, it was decided should be changed to Mary Ellen Dunstable, had been so unnerved by her sufferings that for several days she sorely needed Rhoda's care

and Dr. Ware's medical attention. Rhoda would not permit her to go into the cellar hiding place, but made a bed for her in her own room and watched over her with every solicitude. A dust of powder over her light-colored face was enough to give her the appearance of a white girl of brunette complexion. Only a close observer would be likely to note that the whites of her eyes and the form of her nose gave a hint of negro origin.

"Father," said Rhoda, when the girl had been two days in the house, "I can't bear to think of sending Mary Ellen on in the usual way. She took such awful chances to escape from a horrible fate, and she came so near to death in that box, that it seems to me almost as if God had put her into my charge, and meant for me to make up to her for all that she has suffered. I feel as if I ought not to let her out of my hands until she is safe in Canada."

"Well, what have you thought of doing? Have you a plan?"

"Yes. Mary Ellen looks so much like a white woman that I'm sure she and I could travel together, as two girl friends, and go to Cleveland by the canal. There I can put her on one of our friendly boats and the captain will take charge of her till she is safe on the ferry at Detroit."

They talked the matter over at length, Rhoda dwelling upon the girl's nervous condition, which had so lessened her self-reliance and her courage

as to make doubtful the wisdom of sending her on alone by the ordinary methods. But another reason of equal strength in her own mind, although she did not mention it to her father, was her conviction that here was an opportunity to make atonement for what she felt to be her lover's sin. Moreover, the girl clung to her with such implicit confidence in her power to shield and save that Rhoda's heart rose high with a passion of resoluteness, like a mother's for her threatened offspring.

It was finally decided that her plan should be carried out. The Female Anti-Slavery Society offered its little store of cash—pitifully small since the money panic of two months previous—to help defray Mary Ellen's expenses. Several of the members donated material they had bought for their own winter wardrobes and helped Rhoda make it up into gowns for the fugitive.

On her way downtown one day Rhoda saw a new handbill on the trunk of a tree at the crossing of the two main streets. It was of a sort that had been familiar to her since her childhood. At one side was a crude woodcut of a negro on the run, a bundle on the end of a stick across his shoulder. She stopped to read it, wondering if it concerned any of the blacks who had been sheltered under their roof. It offered three hundred dollars reward, told of the running away of "my negro girl, Lear White," gave a detailed and accurate description of her, saying she was "light-

colored and good-looking," and was signed, "William H. Burns," with his address in Louisville. Rhoda walked on, smiling, thinking in what a little while that poster would be of no consequence whatever to Lear White, for they were to start the next morning.

In the afternoon Marcia Kimball came, to help Rhoda with the final preparations. They tried upon Mary Ellen the gown, in which they had just set the last stitches, that she was to wear on the journey. Much pleased with its effect, Marcia whitened her face with a fresh dusting of powder, and she stood before them a handsome brunette with a pale complexion, big, soft, black eyes and coal-black, waving hair. Marcia clapped her hands, exclaiming:

"Splendid, Rhoda! Nobody would ever guess! Oh, you'll get through all right!"

Rhoda, standing beside the window, glanced out and her face grew grave. "Come here a minute, Marcia," she said. Some men were entering at the side gate. Miss Kimball paled. "Marshal Hanscomb!" she whispered.

"Yes, but I don't believe they suspect that she's here. There are three men in the cellar, that Mr. Gilbertson is going to stop for this evening. We must put on a bold front. Don't let Mary Ellen know—she'd be scared to death, and they might guess. Come," she exclaimed in a louder voice, turning gaily from the window, "let's go down-



stairs and have some music. Marcia, you ought to hear Mary Ellen sing 'Nellie Gray'! Come down and you and she sing it together, and I'll play!"

Laughing and talking, with every appearance of gaiety, though the hearts of two of them were beating fast, the three went down to the living-room and took their places at the piano. With ears strained to catch the sounds from the other parts of the house, Rhoda struck the opening notes and the two voices sang:

"There's a low green valley on the old Kentucky shore,  
Where I've whiled many happy hours away,  
A-sitting and a-singing by the little cottage door  
Where lived my darling Nellie Gray."

Rhoda stopped for a moment and heard the tramp of the men as they came up the stairs from the cellar. Then she laughed merrily.

"Why, Marcia, you're singing all out of tune! I never heard you do that before. Come, now, let's all sing the chorus together!"

Mary Ellen's voice rose, rich and melodious, above the other two as the music made its mournful plaint through the simple lines:

"Oh, my poor Nellie Gray,  
They have taken her away,  
And I'll never see my darling any more!"

The men were going through the rooms upstairs and one of them said to another, as he

stopped to listen, "That girl can sing, can't she?"

Rhoda heard them coming downstairs and knew that Marcia was looking at her with eyes wide and face a little pale. Would they come in? Suddenly she was aware that her nerves were steady and strong as steel and that her heart was beating as calmly as ever. "Now for the next verse, Marcia!" and her fingers moved across the keys. Then she heard the men at the door.

"There's some one in the hall. I must see what they want," she said, rising and casting an encouraging smile at Miss Kimball. Marcia gazed at her wonderingly as she moved calmly across the room and then, feeling the contagion of her courage, turned quickly to Mary Ellen, and to draw her attention away from the door so that she would not face it, began asking her what other songs she knew.

"Excuse me, Miss Ware, for disturbing you and your friends," Marshal Hanscomb was saying, "but my duties under the law make it necessary for me to search your house."

"Certainly, Mr. Hanscomb. Come in if you wish to. Miss Kimball is here—I think you know her—and the other lady is my friend, Miss Dunstable, from Cincinnati, who has been visiting me for the last week."

The marshal stepped inside, his assistants close behind him. Rhoda cast a single glance toward the piano and saw thankfully that Marcia was still

holding Mary Ellen's attention. "If only she won't look around," was her anxious thought. Then turning to the marshal she said seriously, with a gentle smile:

"You see, there's no one else visible in here, Mr. Hanscomb, but if you want to look under the piano and up the chimney—" she stopped on a rising inflection and looked at him gravely. His eyes flashed, but he merely sent an inquiring glance around the room, saw that there were no closets or recesses, and then moved toward the door, saying, "Thank you, Miss Ware."

Rhoda closed the door behind him and leaned against it while she drew a long breath and pressed her lips together tightly for a moment. Then she went back to the piano saying, "Now, Marcia, suppose we let Mary Ellen sing that next verse all alone. I want you to hear her."

The men on the veranda steps, taking their departure, paused and listened to the closing lines as Mary Ellen, in a voice of mournful sweetness, sang on alone:

"They have taken her to Georgia,  
For to wear her life away,  
As she toils in the cotton and the cane."

"That girl makes a right good imitation of the way a darkey's voice sounds," said the one who had spoken before. "I reckon she's practised it."

## CHAPTER XXI

Rhoda's heart was high with expectation of success when she and Mary Ellen started upon the journey to Cleveland. The runaway, in her new gown and a bonnet and veil, played her part perfectly, and Rhoda told her father that he might expect her back in a few days with the news that all had gone well. "And I," she added to herself, "shall then be able to feel that I have paid off Jeff's debt of wrongdoing to this poor girl."

As they were going on board the steamboat Jim came hurrying down to the landing from the post-office with the morning mail, which contained a letter for Rhoda. She saw that it was from Charlotte, and put it unopened into her pocket to read later. For, notwithstanding her inward assurance that her adventure could not fail, she felt anxious about the short time they would have to remain on the river boat. Slave traders and their agents and slave catchers were constantly journeying up and down the river, and if one of these who had appraised Mary Ellen in her days of bondage should happen to see her he might recognize her as Lear White. She kept her charge engaged in conversation, the better to carry out the pretense

that they were two ladies traveling together, and warned her not to raise her veil.

The transfer to the canal boat safely made, Rhoda felt much less anxious and relaxed a little of her care. They sat upon the deck, and Mary Ellen lifted her veil now and then, the better to see the succession of charming views through which they passed. The wooded hills were ablaze with autumn foliage and these alternated with open lands where fields of brown stubble, acres of ripened corn, pasturing cattle and busy farm yards told of autumn's rewards for the year's labor. Mary Ellen was much interested in all this and had many questions to ask as to how the work was done and whether or not it would be the same in Canada. Several hours passed in this way before Rhoda bethought her again of the letter from Charlotte. Smiling at thought of the enthusiastic account it would contain of the round of pleasures since her last missive, she took it from her pocket and drew a little apart, while Mary Ellen became engrossed in looking at a town which they were approaching. A number of people were at the landing and she gazed at them, the tree-shaded streets, the buildings and the church spires with the self-forgetfulness of a child amid new surroundings.

Instead of the long letter she expected Rhoda found in the envelope a single sheet and dashed across the middle of it the one sentence, "I told

you I'd soon be engaged, and I am! Charlotte."

The words danced and blurred before her eyes as she stared at them, all her attention indrawn to the pain in her breast. This, then, was all love meant to a man—the whim of a moment or a month, ready to be captured by the first pretty girl who made the effort. Had it not been the same with Horace Hardaker? Why should she have expected Jeff's love to be of any more substantial fiber? And, moreover, what right had she to expect or wish him to be faithful to her? But her quivering heart cried out that if he had loved as she did he would have been faithful, even unto death. And down in the bottom of her soul she knew that her pain was not all for his lost love, that some of it, much of it, was for her ideal of his love and faith and chivalrous heart, stabbed to death by this immediate surrender to Charlotte's allurements.

"Miss Rhoda! Miss Rhoda! Miss Rhoda!"

The frightened cry, repeated over and over, seeming at first to come out of some far-off space, pierced her indrawn consciousness. She looked up in a dazed way, her thoughts stumbling back slowly to her surroundings. Then she saw that Mary Ellen, between two men, was being hustled off the boat.

She sprang after them and seized the arm of one of the men. "What are you doing?" she demanded.

"You'll soon find out what you've been doing!" the man replied.

"This is an outrage!" Rhoda exclaimed. "Let this woman go, or I shall have you arrested! She is Miss Dunstable of Cincinnati, and is traveling with me. Let her go, I say!"

The man laughed and pushed on. "No, she ain't. She's Lear White and she's a slave and belongs to William H. Burns. I'm his agent and I was with him when he bought her and helped to take her and the rest of his gang to Louisville, where she give him the slip. I come up through this black abolition country to watch for her, and I knew her the minute I set eyes on her, though you have got her fixed up so fine."

With one sweep of his handkerchief across her cheek, he exposed a broad stripe of browner skin. He laughed contemptuously, and a number of others who had gathered round them on the landing laughed also. Rhoda heard the epithet, "nigger thief," in derisive tones passed from one to another. She knew well that if the crowd's sympathies were with him there was no telling what it might do. Gripping his arm with both hands and bracing herself against his effort to move on, she faced about, head high and eyes flashing, and cried:

"Is there no one here who will help me to save this poor girl?"

Then she was aware that from the back of the

concourse some men were pushing their way toward her. She struggled against the efforts of Mary Ellen's captors to go on and would not release her hold of the one next her, thinking that here might be deliverance, or, at least, help. As they came nearer she saw that one was in Quaker garb, and her hopes rose. In the matter of a runaway slave there was no doubting on which side would be the active sympathy and assistance of a Friend. In response to his inquiry she told him her own and her father's name.

"Yes, yes," he said heartily, "I've heard of Dr. Ware." He glanced at Mary Ellen, dumb and patient between her captors, then back at Rhoda, and understanding flashed between their eyes.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "Thee'll soon find friends here, who'll do their best to bring things out all right for thee and for her too."

They moved on, the mob around them rapidly increasing. By the looks of the men and the remarks which reached her ears she knew that it was, for the most part, pro-slavery in feeling. The Quaker was walking beside her, but his companions had disappeared. Presently he whispered:

"The marshal will be here soon. Perhaps thee could slip away and hide. There'll be help if thee wants to try it."

Rhoda shook her head and whispered back: "No, no. I mustn't leave her."

In a whisper so low it barely reached her ears




she heard him say: "Never mind her. She'll be looked after."

But before Rhoda could reply three men, pushing their way authoritatively, were beside them, and a moment later she found herself under arrest and being marched along between the marshal's two assistants.

Soon she saw that a change was taking place in the character of the crowd. Its numbers were being rapidly augmented, but most of those who were joining it now were silent, and Rhoda guessed by their looks and by the glint of an eye here and there that they were moved by a determined purpose. The marshal surveyed them anxiously, spoke to his aids, and they, with Rhoda between them, held back, then edged their way into a cross street and let the throng surge on past them. Then they rushed her along until they came to a two-story brick building, where they gave her into the charge of another official, who locked her into an upstairs room.

Through the barred windows she could see the mob, now at a standstill half a block down the street, eddying round the center where stood Mary Ellen between her two captors, a drooping figure of despair and resignation. On the outskirts and apparently merely looking on was the Quaker, who had told her his name was Daniel Benedict. And still farther away her eye caught sight of a familiar form, old and shabby, topped by a bell-



crowned hat, standing beside a dingy peddler's wagon and watching the proceedings with an interest which broke out now and then in shrill calls and shuffling capers.

Rhoda leaned against the bars, her hands wrung together, and waited breathlessly for what might happen next. The men were surging and pushing this way and that, and she soon made out a resolute movement on the part of those who were on the outside to force their way to the center. Many of those who made up the nucleus had been moved apparently by idle curiosity, and they were now falling back, out of the way of the onward efforts of the others.

"There's the marshal," Rhoda exclaimed to herself, pressing her face against the bars, "right in front of Mary Ellen! Oh, poor, poor girl! Surely, God won't let them take her back! Those men are pushing up closer! What's the marshal saying? Oh, he's calling for a posse! There, they're fighting! Oh, see, they've got hold of him!"

In her excitement she was breaking into speech. "Oh, oh! They've knocked down the trader!—and the other man—Mary Ellen—they've got her! They've got her! And they're shooting! Oh, again! Again!"

Hands clasped hard against her heart, she stood breathless, silent, watching the struggle, while the sound of shots, the cries of the mob, and the shouts

of the officers broke the stillness of the room. "There, they are getting her out! Oh, don't hurt her! Now—oh, run, Mary Ellen, run, run! Oh, they're helping her—two men—and another running ahead— Oh, God, help her, help her to safety!"

She leaned against the side of the window, sight swimming and lips trembling, as Mary Ellen and her body-guard of rescuers, dashing down another street, passed from her view. Then she turned her attention back to the throng of men who seemed now to be intricately struggling with one another. But presently the mass began to resolve itself. A number, which seemed to contain both parties, for some were evidently trying to stop or hinder the others, rushed after the slave girl and her protectors. Many others fell back and stood near to be on hand for the next development. They had not long to wait, for the marshal and his assistants, regaining their feet, speedily began arresting their assailants. Rhoda presently saw them marching up to the jail door with a dozen men under guard, of whom several were wounded.

A few minutes later she heard a tenor voice, surprisingly good though somewhat cracked with age, singing loudly in the street, "In Dixie land I'll take my stand." She smiled, for she knew the voice at once, and hurried back to the window. Chad Wallace in his dingy peddler's wagon was passing the jail. His eyes were roving carelessly

over the front of the building and she felt sure he saw her, although he made no sign. But he flourished his whip in a wide circle round his head and held it poised for a moment above his shoulder, pointing back into the middle of his wagon.

Later in the day Daniel Benedict came to see her and gave her explanation of what had happened. His wrinkled, benignant face and silver gray hair seemed to her distraught heart to carry assurance of fatherly protection.

"Thy friend is safe now," he told her, "and not much the worse for her experience."

"I saw from that window," she exclaimed, "the way they got her out of the crowd. It was wonderful—just pushing a way for her and handing her on from one to another and protecting her with their bodies!"

"Yes," assented the Quaker, calmly, "it was good work, and quickly done—else, they would not have succeeded. I could take no part in it, for, as thee doubtless knows, it is against my principles to offer violent resistance to the law. But," he hesitated a moment and Rhoda saw a twinkle flicker across his kindly eyes, "I do not feel that it is necessary to hinder those who think differently. There is a pretty strong anti-slavery sentiment here, although there is plenty for the other side too, and we determined some time ago that not another seeker after freedom should ever be sent back to his chains from this place. Those who had

no scruples against violent resistance were to be free to do whatever they might think best and, for the rest of us,—and his eyes twinkled again,—“there would not be lacking work for us, either.”

“But Mary Ellen? How did the trader get hold of her? Do you know how it happened? I had been so watchful, and had let her raise her veil only now and then, when it seemed safe. I had not left her side since we started, until just before the awful thing happened. Then I heard her call and they were dragging her off the boat. I was hardly three feet away and had had my hand off her arm, oh, it seemed hardly a minute! Have you talked with her? Has she told you?”

He nodded gravely and the suggestion of a smile appeared about his lips. Rhoda guessed that Mary Ellen was hidden in his house. “Yes, I have talked with the fugitive. She was leaning on the rail, so interested in looking at the town and at the landing as the boat came up that she forgot about her veil. Then, among the people on shore she recognized the trader and was so frightened that she seemed to lose the power of motion. He saw her the same instant, rushed upon the boat and seized her.”

“Oh, the fault is all mine!” moaned Rhoda. “I should not have left her, I should not have taken my eyes off her, for one single minute! I was too proud, Mr. Benedict, and this is my punishment. For I thought nobody but me could get her safely

to Cleveland and I had been so successful with others — and with her too — that I thought I couldn't fail!"

"Well, she is safe again. But thee is likely to suffer sadly for thy one moment of forgetfulness."

She told him Mary Ellen's story, dwelling especially upon her sufferings during her long hours in the box. When she ended he brought his fist down on his knee and exclaimed solemnly:

"She has earned her freedom twenty times over and she shall have it—fugitive slave law, constitution, marshals, or presidents notwithstanding, even if—if—Daniel Benedict has to forget his principles for once!"

The next day he came again to see her, bringing with him his wife, a little woman in Quaker bonnet and gown, with a strong face and a sweet smile. Mary Ellen, they told her, had been safely started on her way again at midnight. Chaddle Wallace had taken her in his peddler's wagon. Their news well-nigh dissipated Rhoda's anxiety. For, of all the many fugitives he had hauled part or all the way to the northern boundary she knew that not one had failed to reach Canada in safety.

## CHAPTER XXII

In the depths of humiliation Rhoda mourned over the fiasco of her attempt to guide Mary Ellen to freedom. But she soon found that the fiasco itself was bearing a rich crop of results. She was indicted for aiding and abetting the escape of a runaway slave and a dozen men of the rescuing party for obstructing the United States marshal in the performance of his duties and preventing him from rendering back the fugitive. The anti-slavery side retorted by arresting Gordon, the slave trader's agent, and the slave catcher accompanying him, under the state's personal liberty law, for kidnaping, and several members of the marshal's posse, who had used fire-arms, for assault with intent to kill.

As the news spread, meeting after meeting was held all through the central and eastern part of the state and up into the Western Reserve, denouncing the law, expressing sympathy with its victims and declaring the righteousness of setting at naught its provisions. Through the southern portion of the state and wherever there was sufficient pro-slavery feeling to crystallize into such action, counter-meetings were held, which reprobated the unfairness to the South, characterized

in contemptuous terms the actions and principles of believers in the "higher law," declared them to be traitors and called upon the Federal Government to use stern measures in upholding the Fugitive Slave Act.

On the advice of Horace Hardaker, who was to conduct her case, and that of the counsel for her fellow prisoners, both Rhoda and they refused to enter recognizance that they would appear in court when wanted, and therefore were compelled to remain in jail.

"It's an unrighteous law in every respect," said Hardaker, "and our contention will be that it is unconstitutional and void. To consent to return for trial under it would make tacit recognition of its validity. And that we won't do. Besides, staying in jail will make martyrdom out of it, and the effect will be all the more potent."

But Rhoda, although she saw that her failure, in the outcome, would be of more consequence than success would have been, felt the pangs of humbled pride. She talked the matter over with Rachel, Daniel Benedict's wife. For between her and the Quakeress a warm affection had quickly developed. Rachel Benedict visited her as often as the prison officials would allow, and Rhoda soon found that the little, dove-gray figure, with the sweet, strong face and the silver hair, was sure to bring assuaging of her heartaches and renewal of her spiritual strength. Without making



any mention of her personal affairs, Rhoda yet found it possible to talk with her new friend with more intimacy and with greater surety of understanding and response than she had ever been able to do with her mother.

"I was so proud, so self-complacent," she said, "that I thought I could make amends to Mary Ellen for the wrongs that had been done to her. And I showed myself unworthy even to try. I let her be taken, just by being wrapped up for a few minutes in my own affairs, in something that troubled me. Oh, it has been a bitter lesson!"

"Thee seems to me to be too much troubled by thy repentance. If thee lets it engross thee it too will become a sin. And perhaps the sin for which thee is repenting does not deserve so much repentance, after all. If thee did this thing believing in thy inmost soul that it was right and wishing in thy inmost soul to do good to others by means of it, then don't disturb thy heart, Rhoda Ware, with how it seems to have come out. It hasn't ended yet. And thee can be sure there is plenty of time yet for more good to come out of it than thee ever dreamed of."

"Yes, it didn't make any difference to Mary Ellen," Rhoda answered thoughtfully, "for she reached Canada just as safely as if I'd taken her all the way myself. But such an awful wrong had been done to her,—it seemed more horrible than any other case I had known about, and I

wanted to suffer for it myself. I wanted to make atonement for another person's sin. And it has all ended in failure!"

"Well, isn't thee suffering for it? Isn't thee suffering a great deal more than if thee had been successful? But don't delude thyself, Rhoda Ware, by thinking thee can do any good by suffering for another person's sins. We have got to sweat and suffer stripes ourselves for the evil that is in us if we are to be purged of our sins!"

At her window that night, Rhoda pondered long upon these words. "I suppose Mrs. Benedict is right," she said to herself finally. "It was only my pride—and my love, that made me think I could atone for even this one bit of his wrongdoing. He will have to suffer for it, for all of it, himself, before he can see that it is wrong. And we shall all have to suffer, North and South alike, for this awful sin of slavery, for the North is to blame almost as much as the South.

"'Sweat and suffer stripes'! Bloody sweat, father thinks it will be,—he is so sure that it will end in war. Will it come in our time? Oh, surely, things cannot go on like this much longer! So much anger on both sides, so much indignation in the North, so many threats in the South—and all getting worse and worse every year—Oh, if war is to be the end, we must be getting nearly there! War!"

She shivered and pressed her hands against her

face. As the grisly specter of blood and smoke passed vaguely before her mind's eye her anxious thoughts hovered with instant anxiety over the dear image of him who she knew would be among the first to challenge the issue. Then with a little cry she sprang to her feet.

"Shall I never remember I must not think of him like that!" she asked herself with bitterness. "My sister's husband! O, God, help me to forget!" She paced about the room with frowning brows and lips pressed hard together, telling herself, as she had already done a hundred times, that she must learn to forget, as it had been so easy for him to do. And there she touched upon her deepest wound, that his love had not been as fine and as true as she had thought it.

"How could he love another—so different—and wish to marry her, after all that has passed between us? I could not—how could he?" was the question that would come back, again and again. She tried to subdue it by telling herself that since he could, since his love and faith were not equal to hers, he was not worthy of her love and deserved only forgetfulness complete, eternal. But her heart cried out fiercely against this edict of her brain and clung to its need of believing in him.

"He is fine and noble in many, many ways," at last she said to herself, "in nearly all ways the finest and the noblest man I've ever known, and if

his love fell short of all I thought it was, I must try to forgive him that, as I forgive him his blindness about the wickedness of slavery, which kept us apart, and, I suppose—deep down in my heart—I suppose—I'll always love him. But I'll try, oh, I'll try from this minute, always to think of him as Charlotte's husband. He mustn't be Jeff to me any more—just Charlotte's husband! Charlotte's husband!"

During her days in jail she spent much time embroidering dainty things for Charlotte's trousseau, and into these she found herself able to stitch, along with the tears that would fall now and then, prayers and hopes for Charlotte's happiness and earnest desires, since the marriage must be, that she would make her husband happy. But on this latter question she found herself haunted by a doubt that would yield to no arguments based on the sequence of love and happiness.

Charlotte and Mrs. Ware returned home immediately after Rhoda's arrest and it was some time, after her sister's first brief announcement of her engagement, before she heard again from either of them. And afterward their letters were filled mainly with accounts of their plans and preparations for Charlotte's trousseau and wedding. In her replies she could not bring herself to write Jeff's name and so referred to him only as "Charlotte's lover," or "Charlotte's intended." She noticed too that her mother spoke of him only

in the same way while her sister wrote of him as "he," in capital letters.

"They are afraid of hurting my feelings by mentioning his name," I suppose, Rhoda said to herself. "I must get used to it, but—I'm glad they don't."

Charlotte's letters were brief and infrequent and each one contained, in addition to talk about her bridal plans, advice in plenty on the propriety of Rhoda's giving up her "nigger thieving" and her black abolition acquaintance, now that the family was identified with southern interests.

"Dear little sister!" Rhoda would say to herself with an indulgent smile as she read these admonitions. "She's such a child, and she's so positive she knows all about it! I wonder if she'll ever really grow up!"

But her mother's letters gave her much concern. Her arrest and imprisonment had caused Mrs. Ware severe shock and deep grief and her heart was wrung that the necessity was upon her to cause so much suffering.

"I must do whatever I can," she moaned. "It's on my conscience and I must, and I can't be sorry I did this, dear, dear mother, even for your sake. I couldn't live if I didn't do my best to fight this awful evil!"

Evidently, too, Mrs. Ware was not well. The physical ailments that had interfered with her enjoyment of her visit to Fairmount had grown

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worse since her return. Notwithstanding all this the mother heart of her yearned over and wished to be with her first-born. But to this desire Rhoda gave constant denial, lest her burden of grief and pain be made harder to bear.

Dr. Ware came to see his daughter as often as his practice would allow, but his visits were necessarily brief and infrequent. He spoke occasionally of Charlotte's engagement and Rhoda thought he seemed pleased with it.

"It's a very good thing, I guess," he said one day, with a cheerfulness that gave Rhoda a little twinge of unhappiness.

"But he always has loved Charlotte so much," she thought, "and wanted her to have everything she wanted that he'd be glad to have her happy no matter if—"

"She'll be in harmony with her surroundings and he seems to be very much in love with her," Dr. Ware went on. Rhoda turned quickly away lest he see the little spasm of pain that she felt sure was showing itself upon her countenance.

"Your mother, of course, is deeply pleased," he continued. "I don't know but it is giving her almost as much pleasure as your marriage would have done. It will be a good thing for Charlotte to be married happily and settled down. She'll come out all right. I never have had any doubts about her, in the long run, because she's so much like what her mother was at her age."

Horace Hardaker came often to consult with Rhoda in the preparation of her case. He hoped to make a telling presentment and was enthusiastic over the excitement that already had been aroused.

"Of course," he said to her one day in the early winter, when the date set for her trial was almost at hand, "the law and the facts are all against us. The only thing we can do is to appeal to the sentiment against the law. Whether we lose or win, the affair is making a big breeze that's going to be bigger yet!"

"You know, Horace," she replied, "that I don't care in the least what they do with me,—except on mother's account. What I want most is to help all I can in the fight against slavery and if it will do more good for me to stay in jail than to go home and work with the Underground again, why then—" she looked straight at him and a smile flashed from her lips up into her eyes—"in jail let me stay!"

He smiled back at her and his blue eyes lighted with admiration as he laid one hand for a moment over hers. "Rhoda, I've told you this before, but I must say it again, and I shall always say it—you're the grandest girl there is anywhere!"

After he was gone she sat with a tender smile on her lips. "Dear Horace!" she was thinking. "Such a good friend as he is! Sound and true to the bottom of his heart! Why didn't I happen to fall in love with him? . . . Well, it seems to

be getting nearly time—for me to refuse him again!”

It was within a day or two of the opening of her trial, which was to be the first of the series, when Rhoda finally brought herself to the point of writing to Jefferson Delavan. Many times she had told herself that, since he was to marry her sister, she ought to let him know that in her heart were only wishes for his happiness. But it had been a hard thing to do and she had postponed it from week to week. At last, her sense of duty would be put off no longer and she resolutely faced the heartache that she knew the task would make all the more poignant.

“Dear Friend,” she wrote. “Charlotte has told me of the happiness that came to her and to you during her visit to Fairmount. I am sure you will believe me when I say it is my most earnest wish that that happiness will never be any less than it is now and that it will grow greater during the many long years of wedded life that I hope are before you. In your and her feelings and convictions there is nothing to divide you, nothing to prevent the complete union of hearts and souls which is the only thing that can make marriage worth while. I am sure, since you love her, that you will always be very tender to Charlotte. To me she has always been just “little sister” and it is difficult for me to realize that she is really a woman and about to become a wife.




At home we have always spoiled her and that has made her, sometimes, in a merry way, rather ruthless of other people's feelings. But I have no doubt your love will make you understand that this is only on the surface and that her heart is true and loving. For you both, dear friend, soon to be brother, my heart is full of every good wish. Always your friend, Rhoda"—she paused here, on the point of signing her name in the old way, but "Adeline" seemed sacred to those other days and to the love that had been between them then, and she could not write it here. So she added only "Ware" and quickly folded and sealed the letter.

As she looked at the envelope it seemed as if it were the coffin of her love, ready for burial, as if she had said a last good-by to all the pleasure it had brought into her heart. Now only the pain was left. She bowed her head upon her hands and some scalding drops trickled through her fingers. Her jailer's knock sounded at the door and she sprang to her feet and dried her eyes. Hardly had she time to control her sobs when it opened and Jefferson Delavan crossed the threshold.

His look was deeply earnest and intent upon her as he moved forward, holding out both hands and saying, "Rhoda! I could stay away no longer!"

"Jeff!" she faltered, stepping back. "I—I— had just written to you!"



“Written to me! Rhoda! Did you ask me to come?”

There was no mistaking the look of glad surprise and love that suddenly broke over his countenance. Rhoda gazed at him in perplexity and instinctively pressed one hand against her heart, as if to keep down the responsive love that was trying to leap upward, as she said to herself, “Charlotte’s husband! Charlotte’s husband!”

Still moving backward, away from him, as he followed her across the room exclaiming again, “Sweetheart, did you ask me to come?” her bewildered, apprehensive thought sprang to the conclusion that she must make him be true to Charlotte, that she must not let him betray the “little sister.”

“Charlotte—” she ejaculated—“your engagement—I wrote to wish you happiness!”

He stopped short and stared at her with puzzled eyes. “What under heaven do you mean?”

“Why, your engagement to my sister! Aren’t you going to marry Charlotte?”

“Assuredly, I’m not!” was his quick and emphatic answer.

“Have you—have you—broken it off, then—so soon?” She was moving her trembling hands over each other, unable to keep them still, and holding her face half averted, afraid to look at him save in brief glances, lest her eyes might betray the love that was swelling in her heart.

"You are talking in puzzles, Rhoda! I've never had the faintest desire to marry Charlotte, or anybody but you."

Her face dropped lower and her bosom heaved. What could it all mean? Had they been deceiving her? And why? "She said—that is—I understood—" she stumbled. Then he broke in upon her embarrassed bewilderment.

"She didn't say she was going to marry me, did she? Lloyd Corey is the happy man. It was love at first sight, of the most violent sort, with him, and he would take nothing but an outright 'yes' for his answer, and that inside of two weeks. It was a pretty little love comedy, and I wished a hundred times that you were there to watch it with me."

She moved unsteadily to a chair and sank down, her face in her hands. It had been such tragedy to her! And now it was taking all her self-control to hold herself firmly in hand under the reaction. At once he was beside her, dropping upon one knee and trying to take her hands from her face. "What is it, Rhoda? What is the matter? Look at me, dearest!"

"Yes, Jeff—let me realize—wait—one moment!" He watched her anxiously, her hands in his, as with a deep, long breath, a tension of the muscles and a pressing together of her lips she regained control of herself. She withdrew her

hands and slowly lifted her face as he rose to his feet.

"It's nothing, Jeff—no, I don't mean that—it is so much. But—I thought—Charlotte led me to think that—she was going to marry you—and now—to find that you're not—that you still—" She stopped and half turned away her face, trying to hide the confession she knew was there of all it meant to find that his love was still her own. But already he had seen enough to set his heart on fire and he sprang toward her, as if to take her in his arms.

"And you cared so much? Rhoda, deny me no longer!"

She drew away from him and said humbly: "Can you forgive me, Jeff? Indeed, I would not have thought it possible, but it seemed to have happened. It was just one of Charlotte's tricks."

"Forgive you, dear heart? I do not think you could do anything that I would not forgive!"

Her glance swept the room. Then she looked up at him with a smile and said significantly, "Even this?"

"Even this, Rhoda, else I would not be here. I held out against the pleading of my heart as long as I could. But I longed so much to see you and wanted so much to help you, that I couldn't stay away any longer. I've come, dear, to beg you once more to be my wife. Let me give you, at once, the protection of my name—"

She drew back and lifted her head proudly. "I have already the protection of my father's name and the approval of my conscience. I should feel myself a coward, and a traitor to myself, if I tried to crawl under any other now."

"I understand what you mean—and I beg your pardon. But we both know now, more surely than we knew before, how necessary we are to each other, how deep and true and everlasting our love is. Don't you realize that neither of us can ever be happy until we have joined our lives together? What are the days and the weeks for us now but just a constant yearning for each other's presence. Look forward, Rhoda, to months and years of that, think of how much more life will mean for us both, if only you will give up and listen to what your heart tells you."

She had risen and was standing beside her chair, one hand on its back. He came close to her and rested his hand near hers. She was conscious too that his other arm was outstretched behind her, hovering close, ready to sweep her into his embrace. The struggle in her heart, longing to heed the call of his, quick with desire to make amends for the injustice she had done him, tumultuous with rejoicing that his love had been all she had thought it, was almost more than she could bear. He was so near—she had only to lean toward him a little, and his arm would be around her and her head upon his breast. Ah,

the blessed peace there would be in that haven of repose! Already she could feel its stilling waters wrapping round her, numbing the power of resistance.

He leaned a little nearer and his voice was low and compellingly sweet, "Rhoda! Come to my arms, where you belong! Do not deny our love any longer!"

She saw his hand on the back of the chair moving instinctively toward her own,—a sinewy, brown, masterful hand, which held her eyes as it drew nearer, little by little, as if drawn by some irresistible attraction. She knew that his eyes in that same way were fixed upon her own, long, slender, nervous, the sort of hand that works out the behests of a strenuous soul. And she knew, also, as she waited, silent, trying to force herself to voice once more the dictates of her conscience, she knew that, if his hand touched hers before she could bring herself to speak, she could resist no longer. Still she stood, speechless, her fascinated eyes upon his masterful hand, her body thrilling with the surety that if she did not speak now, at once, in another moment she would be in his arms, and the struggle over.

"Oh, my poor Nellie Gray,  
They have taken her away,  
And I'll never see my darling any more!"

The words of the negro song, in a negro

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woman's voice, came floating into the room, mingled with the sounds of broom and scrubbing brush. They brought to Rhoda instant memory of Mary Ellen's melodious tones, singing in happy unconsciousness of peril, and of her own strained and fearful attention as she listened to the footsteps of the marshal's posse. And then like a flash passed before her mind's eye the ashen face and shaking figure of Mary Ellen, as her father and Jim lifted her from the box that had almost been her deathbed.

The numbing waters fell away, she raised her hand and pressed it against her heart with the impulsive, unconscious gesture he knew so well, and moved apart.

"Jeff, it's no use talking any more about this," she said in tremulous accents. "The last time we said all that is to be said."

"Don't say that! It makes everything so bare and hopeless! It makes me fear that you have killed your love. Rhoda, you do love me, yet?"

She turned slowly toward him and lifted her downcast face, alight with all the glow that was in her heart. "Jeff," and the word as it came from her tenderly smiling lips was a caress, "Jeff, I love you so much that my heart has made me forgive you even that you allowed Mary Ellen—Lear White—to be sold."

"My sweet! And I love you so much that my

heart has made me forgive even your stealing her away!"

For a moment it seemed to them that gray eyes and brown melted into each other. And then the comedy of their cross-conscienced hearts struck her sense of humor, the corners of her mouth trembled and deepened and a smile flashed over her face and sparkled in her eyes. At that they both laughed, softly, in the tenderness of perfect understanding. Then she saw the old baffled, determined look overspread his face as turning sharply he strode across the room and back.

"My God, Rhoda! Why have our hearts snared us into this misery? Why don't you loathe me as you do all that I believe in and stand for? Why can't I condemn and scorn you as I do all the rest of your tribe? Why must I, when I detest and am injured by what is dearest to you, still see in you my ideal of all that is lovable and womanly? My love, my love, why can't I hate you instead of loving you so that you are the only woman in all the world I want for my wife? Must our love be forever a curse instead of a blessing?"

He flung himself into a chair beside the table, every muscle of his body expressive of anger and rebellion at the mysterious forces of human life that had played this scurvy trick upon them, pitted against each other loving heart and steadfast conscience and left them, like two cocks in a pit, to fight it out in a struggle to the death.



Did they laugh at him and at her, those Caliban spirits of the universe, that with grim and cruel humor are forever setting human purpose awry and sending it, lop-sided and ludicrous, far aside its mark? Did they laugh and cheer and find pleasure in that struggle, the sure result of the innate upward-strivingness of the human soul, like human beings around a cock-pit betting upon which instinct, which spirit, which physique, shall prove the stronger? Or, perhaps, was Caliban pushed aside by some Angel of the Sword, infinitely just and infinitely merciful, that with stern lips whispered to pitying eyes, "No, let them struggle, for only by struggling, even to the uttermost, can their souls grow!"

Softly Rhoda came near, hesitatingly put forth one hand and let it rest for an instant upon his arm. At her touch he straightened up and unconsciously one hand sought the place upon his arm where hers had lain. "I don't believe, dear, it will be forever. I don't believe it will be very much longer."

"What do you mean, Rhoda?" he cried, springing up. "Do you really think there is hope for us?"

"Yes, Jeff, I do. But I don't suppose you'll see it as I do. It's only that I think," she was speaking timidly, and yet with a grave eagerness of voice and manner, "and so do a good many of us, that slavery can't last much longer. We feel

sure that its end is bound to come, in one way or another, and that before long. And when slavery is swept away, Jeff, and the whole country is clean of it, then there will be no gulf between us!"

Her serious eyes were luminous as they met his unbelieving ones and in her face was the subdued glow of one who looks afar off upon a land of promise and knows that toward it his feet are set. Love and disbelief were mingled in the somber countenance he bent upon her.

"No, Rhoda, I do not agree with you. And much as I love you, sweet, I would not, if I could, purchase our happiness at such a cost. I would not, if I could, be such a traitor to the South. But I shall always love you, dear heart, and I shall always hope that you will yet be mine." He held her hand tenderly for a moment in both of his, pressed it to his lips, bowed gravely, and left the room.

## CHAPTER XXIII

"It's going to be a good speech, Horace, and it will surely attract attention," said Rhoda Ware to her counsel on the day before the opening of her trial.

Hardaker had just gone over with her an outline of the address he would make in summing up her case. It was intended for the people outside the court room, near and far, who would talk about it and read it in the newspapers, quite as much as for the ears of the jurors. So high and strong had risen the feeling on the slavery question that in some parts of Ohio, as well as elsewhere, the lawyer who devoted energy and ability to the defense of captured fugitives and their helpers could be sure of early and ample political reward. Hardaker was ambitious. He meant, as soon as he could reach an opening door, to enter upon a public career and he had mapped out for himself election to Congress, and after that a steady ascent to high places in national affairs—such a career as, half a century ago, engaged the talents and aspirations of ten times as many eager and capable young men as now think it worth consideration. The fact is an ugly one and not creditable to the quality of our national growth.

But for Horace Hardaker in this present case the spurrings of ambition were only an added incentive. His conviction was profound that slavery was an evil and the Fugitive Slave Act a monstrous law and his desire to oppose either or both or anything that tended to strengthen the institution of slavery amounted to a passion. And, in addition to these motives, his intimate friendship with Dr. Ware and his love for Rhoda incited him to exert himself to the utmost in her defense.

"I hope it will, Rhoda," he replied, "but I'm doubtful if it will do you any good. Your violation of the law was open and flagrant and we don't want to deny it or attempt to mitigate it in the least."

"Indeed we don't."

"The decision in the case, then, will depend entirely on the political sympathies of the jury, and the other side is not likely to allow any man on it who has anti-slavery convictions. It would be a victory worth while, Rhoda, if I could get you off! Not only for you, which would gratify me enough, but for the anti-slavery cause! To have conviction refused in a case as bare-faced as this would be a big blow toward making the Fugitive Slave law a dead letter!"

"If I could think," said Rhoda earnestly, "that any act of mine would help to bring that about, I'd be willing to undergo this all over again."

He looked at her admiringly and drew his chair

nearer, as he said: "Well, you can rest assured that your attempt to help Mary Ellen is having important results. And the waves are spreading out and getting bigger, Rhoda!" Another hitch brought his chair still closer.

"I'm glad of that, and I want you to remember, Horace, when you are making your speech, that you are not to consider me or my sentence at all. Say the thing that will help toward what we all want. Don't think about me—just think about Mary Ellen and what she was willing to undergo, and all the rest of those poor black creatures that are longing so for their freedom."

His chair was beside hers now and he was seizing her hand. "Rhoda! Not think about you! How can I help it? Don't you know I'm always thinking about you and always hoping that some day you'll think better about what I've been hoping for so long? Isn't there any chance, any prospect of a chance, for me yet?"

She laid her free hand upon his two that were clasping hers. "I'm sorry, Horace! You know how much I like you, how much I prize your friendship—but you are like a dear brother to me, Horace, and I can't think of you any other way!"

"But isn't it possible that some time—don't you think, Rhoda, that after a while you'll learn to like me the other way too? You know what I

am, you know how much I love you—won't my heart's love draw yours, after a while?"

She shook her head and drew her hands away. "No, Horace, there isn't any hope, not the least in the world. And I wish, dear Horace, I wish you would put it quite out of your mind. Don't waste any more time thinking about me. There is many a nice girl who would make you a good wife, and I do wish, Horace, for your own sake, you would fall in love with one and marry her."

He looked at her searchingly. "When a girl talks that way she really means it."

"You know I mean it, Horace."

"I mean, Rhoda, that she knows her own heart, clear through, and feels sure about it."

"That's the way I know mine," she answered softly.

He seized her hand again as he exclaimed, "Does that mean, Rhoda, that there is some one else and that your heart is full already?"

"Yes, Horace. It means that I love some one else so deeply that I can never have a love thought for any other man. I love him with all my heart, although I don't suppose I shall ever marry him. But I shall never marry any one else, and I could no more think of you or any one else with the kind of love you want than I could if I were his wife."

There was something like reverence in the gesture with which he put down her hand. "Then that is the end of it for me, Rhoda. Would you

mind telling me, is it that"—he paused an instant, supplying mentally the adjective with which he usually thought of Rhoda's lover—"slaveholder, Delavan, from Kentucky?"

"Yes, Horace."

He rose and took up his hat. "If that's the way it is with you," he began, then stopped, looking fixedly. "Poor girl!" he went on, resting his hand lightly for an instant upon her head. "You ought to have had a happier fate!"

"It's as good as I deserve, Horace," she replied cheerfully. Then her face lighted with the glow that had been in her heart since Delavan's visit, and she went on: "And it might have been so much worse!"

That same glow, as of profound inward happiness, was upon her countenance the next day as she sat in the court room. On one side of her was her father and on the other sat Rachel Benedict, with wrinkled hands primly folded in the lap of her plain gray gown, her kindly, bright old eyes and sweet smile bent now and then upon her young friend as she whispered some encouraging word. Behind her were Mrs. Hardaker and Marcia Kimball and other friends from the Hill-side Female Anti-Slavery Society.

In the back of the room, throughout the trial, sat Jefferson Delavan. He was always in his place in the same seat, when she entered, and their eyes would meet once and a faint smile play

around her lips for an instant. Then she would not look again in his direction, but her face kept always its glow of inward happiness.

Horace Hardaker sat with his gaze moodily fixed upon Delavan's dark head. Jeff's eyes were upon Rhoda's face and Hardaker felt resentfully that within their depths must lie some hint of the lover's yearning. It was almost time for him to begin his address. But his thoughts were not upon what he was about to say nor upon how he could most move the jury. Instead they were busy, with indignant wonder, upon how "that damned slaveholder" had contrived to win the rich and undying love of such a girl as Rhoda Ware.

For the way of a man with a maid is always a sealed book to other men. A woman can guess, or she knows instinctively, how and why another woman has won a man's love. But the side of a man's nature with which he does his wooing is so different from any manifestation of himself that he makes among his fellows that to them it is an unknown land. Therefore they are inclined to be skeptical as to its attractiveness.

But Hardaker was much more than skeptical. He was irritated, and even angry, that "such a man as that" should have dared to think himself worthy of Rhoda's love. And when he presently rose to address the jury the rankling in his heart lent sharper vigor to every thrust he made against the slave power and put into his tones a savage



indignation as, with eyes fixed upon Delavan's face, he thundered his indictments.

An audience of character and intelligence crowded the court room to the doors, while outside, in the hall and around the windows people stood on benches, listening intently, for hours at a time. From all over the county, from surrounding counties, and from as far away as Cleveland, men of substance and of prominence had left their homes and business and journeyed hither to listen to the proceedings and to testify by their presence their sympathy with the defense.

But the pro-slavery side also had its representatives, although in the minority, who were of equal consequence and standing. It was such an audience as would gratify any attorney, wishing to influence the community as well as the jury.

As he rose for his address Hardaker presented a manly, attractive figure and a vigorous, almost a magnetic, personality. Sweeping the court room with his eyes, he waited for a moment and then began with a couplet from a popular anti-slavery song, a song that had roused the echoes in thousands of enthusiastic gatherings, all over the North. No one within the reach of his voice needed any explanation of its meaning:

"Tis the law of God in the human soul,

'Tis the law in the Word Divine."

He quoted the injunction of the Mosaic law against the returning of an escaped servant and

the commands of the New Testament for the succor of the oppressed, and in vivid language set them forth as the law of the Divine Word, the command of God, and therefore infinitely more binding upon men and women who believed in God and accepted the Bible as his Word than any law made by man in defiance of the Almighty's command. In a voice that gave full value to its pathetic appeal he told the story of Mary Ellen's heroic endeavor to escape from bondage and a fate "like unto the fires of hell." Then he called upon the fathers and mothers of all young girls to tell him if the command of Christ, "Do unto others as you would that others do unto you," had lost all its meaning, if humanity, Christianity, fatherhood—even ordinary manhood—no longer felt its force. Following the precedent set by a number of lawyers of wide reputation he analyzed the relation of the Fugitive Slave Act to the Constitution and concluded that it violated the rights guaranteed by the basic law of the country, and therefore, since it was unconstitutional, to disregard its provisions was not unlawful and his client had committed no crime.

"This law was passed at the behest of the slave power," he declared. "It was conceived in iniquity, the iniquity of the South's determination to put upon slavery the seal of national approval; it was begotten in corruption, the corruption of compromise and bargain; and it was born in the

dastardly willingness of misrepresentatives of the people to truckle to Southern arrogance and betray the convictions and the conscience of the North.

“Shall we then, free men and women of Ohio, betrayed as we have been and misrepresented as we are by this so-called law, be expected to cast aside the commands of Christianity and the obligations of common brotherhood, transform ourselves into bloodhounds to chase the panting fugitive and send him back to his chains and, as in this case, to such a hell of lust and vice as all decent manhood and womanhood must shudder at? In the name of all that humanity holds sacred, I answer, no! A thousand times, no!

“The learned counsel for the prosecution has seen fit to sneer at our belief in the higher law,” Hardaker went on, with body erect and hand upraised, his full, melodious, resonant voice filling the court room and the corridors and carrying his words even into the street. “I answer that that law has my entire allegiance and that I stand here to defend and uphold it and to demand the rights of those who feel bound, as I do, by its commands. I feel assured, and you well know, gentlemen of the jury, that I voice the sentiments of thousands upon thousands of Christ-loving and God-fearing men and women when I say that if any fleeing bondman comes to me in need of help, protection, and means of flight, so help me

the living God in my hour of greatest need, he shall have them all, even to the last drop of my life's blood!"

Like the sudden upburst of a volcano, the court-room broke into resounding applause. Men sprang to their feet, swung their hats and cheered. Women stood upon benches, waved handkerchiefs and clapped their hands. The rapping of the judge's gavel and the cries of the officers for "order in the court" were drowned in the uproar and hardly reached even their own ears. Then the sharp insistence of hisses began to be heard. Jefferson Delavan, who had been listening with hands clenched, frowning brows and angry eyes, added his voice to the sounds of disapproval. For a few minutes the tumult continued, and then, at the judge's order, the court officers began forcing the people out.

They poured into the street and organized a mass-meeting in the square in front of the court house. Numbers of men came running from all directions and while the meeting was in progress word filtered out that the jury had found the prisoner guilty and the judge's sentence had imposed a fine of one thousand dollars and costs and imprisonment for thirty days.

Resolutions were at once passed denouncing the judge and deciding, "since the courts no longer dispensed justice," to proceed to the jail, liberate the other prisoners and protect them from the

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operations of "an outrageously unjust and tyrannous enactment."

Delavan, looking on at the outskirts of the gathering, heard the resolutions. He knew that Rhoda would soon be conducted back to her quarters in the jail and he ran thither, hoping to arrive before the crowd of rescuers. In custody of the marshal she had just reached the jail entrance.

"Rhoda!" he exclaimed. "You are in danger here! A mob is coming to break in the doors. Marshal, bring her with me, so we can find a place of safety for her."

She drew herself up and looked at him with the same pale face and brilliant eyes with which in the woods, so long ago, she had opposed his quest for his fugitive slave. Scarcely she seemed the same being who, only a few days before, had almost trembled into his embrace.

"No," she said slowly, "these are my people and with them is where I belong. This is where your law has sent me and while I am in its power I want no place of safety. Marshal, take me in!"

The marshal was doubtful, asked Delavan what he meant and what he purposed to do, and while he hesitated the mob came rushing up the street and his only course was to hurry inside with her and bar the door.

The mass of men surged against the jail en-

trance and with pieces of timber and bars of iron soon forced their way in. Then they trooped through the building, sweeping along all the prisoners who were awaiting trial under the Fugitive Slave law. They urged Rhoda to walk out into freedom and defiance of her sentence. But she smilingly shook her head and told them:

"No, thank you. It's better to serve out my sentence, and then I'll be free to defy the law again in my own way."

Exultantly the throng poured out into the street again with the prisoners, and faced two companies of militia, ready to fire. Even the hottest heads among them paused at this and after some parleying they agreed to disperse and allow the men to be taken back to confinement.

Among those awaiting trial for aiding in Mary Ellen's rescue and escape were the pastor of the leading Presbyterian church in the town, the superintendent of a Methodist Sunday School, a professor from Oberlin College who had happened to be in the place on that day, a merchant, two lawyers and a physician, together with some clerks, laboring men, a farmer and several free negroes. The day following the conclusion of Rhoda's trial was Sunday, and the Presbyterian minister preached from the jail yard to a large concourse of people who stood for two hours in a biting wind, for it was now well on in the winter, listening with the closest attention. The sermon,

which was mainly an anti-slavery address, added fuel to the already flaming excitement.

Meetings were held and bands of men began to organize and arm themselves. Militia guarded the jail night and day. The pro-slavery sympathizers, though in the minority in this region, yet made up a considerable share of the populace, and, angered and uneasy, they also began to prepare for whatever might happen. To hints that the Fugitive Slave law prisoners might yet be delivered from jail they retaliated with threats that those of their own party who were under duress for infraction of state laws should no longer suffer imprisonment.

So acute did the situation become that Governor Chase hurried to Washington to consult with President Buchanan, assuring him that while he intended to support the federal government, as long as its authority was exercised legitimately, nevertheless he felt it his duty to protect the state officials and the state courts and that this should be done, though it took every man in the state to do it

Finally, a compromise was arranged by which the federal government dropped the remaining prosecutions for the escape of Mary Ellen and released the prisoners, while the state authorities dismissed the suits against the slave trader's agent and his companion and the members of the marshal's posse.

The episode was amicably settled, but the flames of contention had been so fed by it that they mounted higher and higher. Meetings continued to be held all over those portions of the state where anti-slavery sentiment was strong. They culminated, soon after Rhoda's release, in an immense mass-convention at Cleveland attended by many thousand people and addressed by public men of distinction, where, amid the greatest enthusiasm, resolutions were passed denouncing the Dred Scott decision and declaring the Fugitive Slave Act unconstitutional and therefore void.

In the pocket of the dress she had worn on the day of her arrest Rhoda chanced to find, soon after this convention, Charlotte's note telling of her engagement. She smiled soberly as she thought of all the consequences that had resulted from this manifestation of her sister's puckish spirit.

"If she hadn't misled me this way," Rhoda's thoughts ran, "I wouldn't have forgotten about everything else the way I did for a few minutes, and I would have kept watch of Mary Ellen and made her keep her veil down, and then that man wouldn't have recognized her, and we'd have gone right on and nothing would have happened!"

Rhoda's trial aroused the keenest interest all over the North. But it was an interest that cared only for principles. The personalities of those engaged in the matter were of the slightest consequence. Everywhere, in newspapers and in



conversation, there was discussion of the affair, and of the consequences to which it might lead. But the people concerned in it were only so many cogs in a mighty Wheel of Fate, turning resistlessly, and ever about to bring into the present, out of the unknown future, no man could tell what.

To the South and its northern sympathizers the whole affair was irritating and alarming in high degree. Democratic newspapers and their readers declared the attitude of "Chase and his abolition crew" to be equivalent to a declaration of war against the United States and welcomed the prospect, while the compromise by which the difficulty was finally settled they described with bitterness as "another triumph" for the creed of the "traitorous higher law with its open sanction of treason and rebellion."

But there was one element in the North to whom Rhoda Ware's share in these events was not a matter of indifference. In the eyes of the abolitionists she was a martyr to the cause to which they were zealously devoted and during the month in which she served out her sentence letters poured in upon her containing money for the payment of her fine and warm words of praise. The Female Anti-Slavery Society of Hillside sent her the whole of their small store, saying, "we shall be proud to share even so little in the martyrdom of our beloved president." Rhoda wept over it, knowing well at what cost of personal sacrifice the little

hoard had been gathered. But she knew, too, that to beg them to take back their offering would be to stab their very hearts. Other anti-slavery societies in Ohio and elsewhere sent contributions. There were checks from rich men in New York, New England and Pennsylvania, whose purses were always open for the anti-slavery cause and whose custom it was to give brotherly encouragement to Underground operators who fell into the toils of the Fugitive Slave Act by helping to pay their fines. The amount in which Rhoda had been mulcted was entirely paid, as was the assessment in many another case, by these enthusiastic co-workers.

Most precious to her, however, were the letters which came from abolitionists all over the country with their words of praise, sympathy, encouragement and hope. Many of them were from men and women whose names will be found in the pages of American history as long as the conflict over slavery holds a place therein. Long afterward, when many years of peace had enabled all the people of the land to look back with calm philosophy upon those heated years of contention, and the impartial muse of history had given to the Underground Railroad a high place among the causes which brought on the Civil War and abolished servitude, Rhoda Ware held these letters among her most prized mementos of those stirring days of which she was a part.

## CHAPTER XXIV

The lilac bushes were again in bud and Rhoda Ware was looking at them, pulling down here and there a tall one to see if it was not farther advanced than the rest, and reckoning how soon they would burst into flower, when she saw a tall, erect old man enter the gate. He came up the walk with a peculiar directness of manner, as of one accustomed to go forward with eyes and will upon a single aim. As he approached and asked for Dr. Ware, Rhoda saw in his face something of that same quality of underlying sternness, a sternness expressive rather of uncompromising moral sense than of severity of feeling or of judgment, that marked her father's countenance. His silver-white beard, long and full, lent to this austereness a patriarchal dignity.

She took him to her father's door, but Dr. Ware was engaged with a patient. The stranger asked if it were not she who had been concerned, the previous autumn, in the escape of the slave girl, Lear White, and they talked of that affair and of the consequences to which it led. She felt a magnetic quality in his grave and mellow tones, and in the steady gaze of his deep-set eyes, alert, luminous, penetrating, she was conscious of that

compelling force that lies in the look of all men able to impress themselves upon others. Presently he told her who he was and she thrilled as she heard him speak the words, "Captain John Brown, of Kansas."

"My father and I have spoken of you often, Captain Brown," she said, her eyes and face lighting with the admiration which abolitionists felt for the man whom already they regarded as a hero.

"Yes. We have known each other for many years, and we have been agreed about slavery since a time when there were so few of us that we all felt as brothers."

She had many questions to ask of matters in Kansas, where, she found, he knew the husband of her friend, Julia Hammerton. As they talked she saw presently that his eyes were fixed upon Bully Brooks, who, in full grown feline dignity, was sunning himself on the veranda. The cat's air of complacent ease disappeared and, after some worried movements, it suddenly sprang up with arched back and swelling tail, spat its displeasure and ran away. Charlotte, coming in at the east gate, saw her pet's performance and shot a questioning glance at Rhoda and the stranger as she passed them.

A little later, when her father had taken Captain Brown into his office, Rhoda found Charlotte with Bully Brooks in her lap, alternately soothing

his ruffled dignity and stirring him to angry protest.

"Rhoda, who is that horrid old man?" she demanded.

"Why do you call him horrid? He is the finest, noblest-looking old man I've ever seen, and his character is as noble as his appearance."

"Oh, la! I asked you who he is."

Rhoda hesitated, considering whether or not it would be prudent to let Charlotte know the identity of her father's visitor. For there was much pro-southern sentiment in Hillside and, although John Brown was not yet an outlaw with a price on his head, he was detested and considered an active enemy by all friends of the South. Charlotte noted her pause and bent upon her a keen gaze. Apparently Rhoda did not want to tell her who he was and therefore it became at once an urgent necessity for her to find out. Rhoda felt those intent brown eyes studying her face and decided it would be better not to give her sister reason for suspecting any mystery.

"I suppose he's some old nigger-stealer," Charlotte was saying, still watching Rhoda's expression, "and that's why you think he's such a noble character. Lloyd thinks, and so do I, that nigger-stealing ought to be punished by hanging."

Rhoda smiled at her. "Would my little sister like to see me hanging from a limb of that maple tree yonder?"

"But you'd quit if you knew you were going to be hung for it."

"No, I wouldn't."

Charlotte regarded her with wide eyes. In her secret heart she was beginning to feel not a little awe of this quiet elder sister upon whose countenance she sometimes surprised a look of exaltation. And therefore, to save her own sense of dignity, immensely increased by the prospect of her marriage, she had taken refuge in a patronizing manner.

"Of course you would," she said, with a superior air and a toss of her pretty head. "You say that just to brave it out. Has old Mr. White-Beard come to help you make plans to get arrested again?"

"No. He wanted to see father."

"Oh, well! Who is he? John Brown, or Horace Greeley, or Governor Chase? One of them is as bad as another and they're all tarred with the same brush."

"Which do you think?" asked Rhoda calmly.

Charlotte leaned forward, all eagerness, her intuitions, as they so often did, flashing straight to the truth. "Not John Brown?" she ejaculated. Rhoda nodded, and Charlotte drew back with a little gasp and then seized the cat in her lap with extravagant exclamations of pride and affection.

"My precious Bully Brooks! You knew who he was, didn't you, and you told him what you

thought of him! He's a regular old ogre, Rhoda, and Bully Brooks felt it, didn't you, you darling cat! And you shall go with Charlotte, when she's married, to Corey's Hall, so you shall, where there won't be any nigger-stealers to make you angry."

Rhoda looked on with amusement. Not even yet, although Charlotte's wedding day was fast approaching, could she think of her sister as other than a merry sprite, a spoiled child, of whom it would be too much to expect the sense of ordinary responsibilities. But now a feeling of uneasiness grew upon her, and when presently both rose to go into the house she said:

"By the way, sister, please remember that it is not necessary for you to tell any one about Captain Brown's being here, either now or after he has gone."

Charlotte tilted her chin saucily and laughed. "Don't you know, Rhoda, that I never make promises—except for the fun of breaking them? Besides, I'm a southerner now."

Rhoda laid her hand gently upon the other's shoulder. "Stop, sister. This is a serious matter. I can't forget that once you played the traitor—pardon me, there is no other word for it, although I don't think you meant it that way—but it was the traitor to father and to me. You know how much father loves you and how he'll miss you after you're married. Do you want to

make him feel so much safer then that he can't help being glad you're gone?"

It was a new experience for even Rhoda to take her reckless audacities with so much seriousness, and she looked up wonderingly, at first with pouting and then with trembling lips. "I don't see why you want to make me so unhappy at home, when I'm soon going to leave it," she sobbed. "Do you want to make me hate my home and be glad to go away?"

Rhoda longed to take the dainty, drooping little figure into her arms and speak words of soothing. But she held to her purpose. "Do you want to make father, who loves you so much, glad to have you go away?"

Charlotte stamped her foot. "Of course I don't!" she exclaimed, her fists in her eyes. "And you're perfectly horrid to say such things!"

At once Rhoda gave way to compassion, for she felt that she had gained her point. She drew her sister within her arm, patting her shoulder and kissing her forehead. "There, there, dear! Never mind. I only wanted to make sure we could trust you."

In the afternoon when Dr. Ware was ready to make his round of visits, he asked Rhoda to go with him upon a trip he had to make into the country. As they drove through the glistening young spring he told her of his conversation with his morning's visitor.



"Captain Brown gave me permission to talk it over with you," he said. "I assured him you could be trusted." Rhoda's heart swelled with pleasure at her father's words and at the matter-of-fact way in which he spoke them, for both words and manner made her know how habitual with him their companionship had become.

"I've known him for a good many years," Dr. Ware went on, "and I've always believed that some day he'd strike a big blow, square on slavery's head, do some big thing that would help immensely to get rid of it. For a man of Brown's intelligence, character and personality can't live half his lifetime absorbed by one idea without making something happen. He and I agree on one point, that slavery can be wiped out only by violence. We both see that its roots have gone so deep that to pull them up will make a terrible upheaval. He hasn't the faith that I have, hasn't any, in fact, in political measures and the Republican party. He doesn't believe, as I do, that all this is helping to keep the roots from spreading and getting stronger, and that it will make our victory quicker and easier, when the time for violence does come.

"He thinks that time is nearly here and that he is going to bring it about. He proposes to establish himself, before long, somewhere along the free-state border, with a band of picked followers, drilled in arms, and gather into his forti-

fied camp all the negroes from the near-by plantations. Such of these as wish to go to Canada will be passed on by the Underground, while those who prefer will stay with him and help gather in more slaves from greater distances. As the success of his forays becomes known he thinks that other men will join him from all over the North, until his army, increased also by daring spirits from among the fugitive slaves, will be so large and formidable and slave property be made so insecure that slavery will collapse like the shell of a ruined house."

Rhoda's cheeks were flushed and her eyes shining. "What a daring scheme, father! Do you think it will succeed?"

Dr. Ware smiled doubtfully and shook his head: "I don't think he can carry it through to the end he feels sure of, and I told him so this morning. But his heart is set on it. He has been slowly maturing the plan for twenty-five years, and has even made a tour of the great battlefields and important fortifications of Europe, studying them in the light of this purpose. It seems to me impossible that he can succeed. But he'll scare the South out of its wits and make it angrier and more determined than ever, and that will be a good thing. With the rising tide of public opinion in the North, it will bring the clash that's bound to come a big notch nearer."

"Did he want you to join him, father?"

"Yes. I knew about his plan—we've talked of it before. I have so much faith in the power of the one-ideaed man to achieve things that I've always told him he could call on me for any help it was in my power to give. I've contributed what I could to his Kansas campaign, and I gave him this morning for this scheme all I could spare. I told him, too," Dr. Ware hesitated a little over his words now, "that I might join him in person somewhat later, if his first attempts prove successful, and that perhaps you would come too. For with your knowledge of nursing you would be useful. Do you think you would care to throw yourself into such a scheme as his, full of danger and sure to fail, but likely to deliver an effective blow?"

His eyes were upon her, clear and calm as usual, but brilliant now with the fires of zeal. As they searched her face her own looked back at him, as glowing with zeal as his. "You know I would, father—you did right to tell him so. I'm always ready to go anywhere or do anything that will help our cause. But—mother—what about mother?"

He shook his head sadly and turned away. "Your mother, Rhoda, is incurably ill. She cannot be with us much longer. I had her consult two physicians in Cincinnati on her way home from Fairmount, and they both told her it is only a question of time."

"Oh, father! Can't we do anything for her? Why didn't you tell me before?"

"There is nothing we can do but make her as comfortable and care free as possible while she is with us. I didn't tell you before because she didn't want you to know about it until after Charlotte's wedding, and she doesn't want Charlotte to know it at all. She wants everything to be as cheerful and happy as possible while Charlotte is here. Please don't let her guess that you know."

Charlotte was to be married in May, and during the remaining weeks of that time Rhoda watched her mother with anxious and loving care, taking upon herself, as Mrs. Ware seemed willing to relinquish it, every household responsibility, and noted with aching heart the wasting of her face and figure.

"I believe she is just keeping up by her will power," Rhoda said to Dr. Ware, "so that there shall be nothing to make Charlotte unhappy during her last weeks at home."

"Yes," assented her father, "she wants Charlotte to remember the months of her engagement as the happiest time in her life. We must be prepared for a reaction after it is all over."

After Rhoda's trial and imprisonment no mention of that matter was ever made between her and her mother. When she returned home Mrs. Ware received her with the utmost love and tender-

ness, but without the least reference to the reasons for her absence. In neither words nor manner did she recognize that that absence had been anything other than an ordinary social visit and if it had to be spoken of she referred to it merely as the time "when you were away."

So, now, she made no sign to either her husband or her daughter that she had any knowledge of the Underground activities in which they were engaged or of the fugitive slaves who were sheltered in the house. Rhoda was never able to guess whether she knew much or little of what went on under her roof nor whether or not she resented it or was grieved by it. But the girl's heart ached constantly with sympathy for what she felt must be her mother's pain.

Her compassion and sorrow, however, did not lead her to consider for a moment the idea of giving up the work. Rather, they inspired her to greater zeal, in both thought and action, and to more intense desire to aid in the destruction of slavery. For, in her mind, whatever grief her mother felt, whatever alienation there was between them, were among the evil results of the slave system, just as was the division between her and Jefferson Delavan, and the only way of rightfully meeting them was to attack their cause.

At the wedding Rhoda was bridesmaid and Delavan was groomsman. As she saw her mother's eyes fixed wistfully upon them she felt

fresh twinges of self-reproach. She knew the deep pleasure that Charlotte's marriage to a southerner had brought to the ailing woman, and she knew that this would be as nothing beside her satisfaction and delight could she see her other daughter united in marriage to the son of her old friend. Could it be, after all, Rhoda began to ask herself, that here was where her highest duty lay? Ought she, at whatever cost to herself, make happy her mother's last days?

It seemed to Rhoda that everything conspired, throughout the wedding festivities, to bring her and Delavan alone together, although she knew that they were both trying to avoid such meetings. But he forebore to speak of love, and afterward the merry friendliness of these brief occasions, just touched as they were with the fragrance of intimacy, were among her dearest memories.

When he bade her good-by she felt the lover in his manner and his voice as he said: "It has been two years, Rhoda, but I shall wait two years more, and ten times that, before I give up hope of our wedding!"

Rhoda looked at him with her flashing smile, that lifting of her short upper lip and trembling at its corners and lighting of her eyes, which always sent through his veins a fresh thrill of love, and answered: "Oh, Jeff! What a long time to prepare for a wedding in!"

After it was all over Mrs. Ware failed rapidly.

Rhoda watched her wasting cheeks and growing feebleness with an agony of compassion and constant tumultuous questioning of herself. Her mother had not spoken to her for a long time about Delavan's suit, but she knew that the wish was gathering strength in her breast as she came nearer and nearer to death's door. Rhoda felt it in the wistful look with which the brown eyes, grown so large and childlike in the peaked face, followed her about the room. It spoke to her in the plaintive appeal of the soft southern voice and it pulled mightily at her heartstrings in the clinging to hers of the thin hands, a little while ago so plump and fair.

With her own heart playing traitor, as it always did with every weakening of her resolution, with love and compassion for the invalid pleading incessantly, with a remorse-wrung conscience recalling every hurt she had ever given to her mother and urging that she ought to salve those many wounds with this final atonement, the torment of it became almost greater than she could bear.

One day she found her father alone in his office and, impelled by her distraught heart, she forgot her usual restraints, flung herself on her knees beside his chair and laid her face against his knee.

"Oh, father," she begged, "help me to see what I ought to do! I know mother wants me to marry Jeff—she doesn't say a word about it, but I feel all the time that it is making her last days full of

sorrow. It seems to me sometimes that I can't stand it another minute, that I must give up, because it will make her happy. Would it help her, father, if I did?"

Dr. Ware laid his hand upon her shoulder. Even in her wretchedness the action gave her a little thrill of pleasure, for it was nearer a caress than she could remember he had ever given her.

"Nothing can help your mother now, child. With her, it is a matter of a few months, or weeks, or, perhaps, even days. It would make her happy for that little time—I know it as well as you do. You could feel that you had enabled her to end her days in peace. But whether or not you ought to sacrifice your sense of right to your sense of duty to her is something that only you can decide."

"I know it, father," she answered in low tones as she rose to her feet and wiped the tears from her eyes.

She went out into the yard, gay with the luxuriant blooms of early summer. The white petunias sent up their fragrance and the memories it brought pierced her very heart with poignant sweetness. She went on into the grape arbor and sat down in its cool shadows, asking herself why it was that she could keep her own soul clean only at the expense of another's happiness.

"My happiness, Jeff's happiness," she thought, "they are of our own making and we can choose



our own conditions. But mother, poor, dear, little mother, so sick, with such a little while to live, and her happiness so bound up in this! And if I do it I shall feel all my life that it was wrong, that my soul isn't clean. Oh, mother, how can I become a part of this abomination of slavery, this vile, accursed thing! I'd be glad to die, a hundred times over, for you—but to live and be a part of such wickedness— Oh, mother, how can I? How can I?"

The end came sooner than they expected. On a hot afternoon in midsummer, when the late, red rays of the sun, shining through the half-closed shutters, lay in bands across the floor, Mrs. Ware called Rhoda. "Come close, honey, down beside me," she said, and Rhoda knelt at the bedside. Her mother slipped a feeble arm around her neck.

"You've been a dear, loving daughter to me," she said, "even if we've thought so differently about some things. You are like your father, Rhoda, and that has always been a pleasure to me. You've wanted to make me happy, just as he always has, and in almost everything you have. No mother ever had a better, dearer daughter than you, honey."

"Oh, mother," Rhoda exclaimed, the tears welling into her eyes, for in the pale, pitiful face she saw the shadow of the death angel's wing and felt his near approach in the chill that struck into her own breast. "Dear mother, I've never done half

enough for you, never been half as good and loving to you as you deserved!"

"Always you have, dear, except in one thing. You know how much for two years I've wanted you to marry Adeline's son, dear Jeff. And you would not. I haven't much longer to live, and if you want to make my deathbed happy promise me that you will. Oh, Rhoda, send for Jeff and marry him here beside my bed and have your dying mother's blessing!"

Rhoda was sobbing with her face upon her mother's shoulder. "Dearest mother," she pleaded, "don't ask that of me."

"It's the only thing in all the world that I want, honey. You love Jeff, and he adores you, and I know that you'll be happy together, if you'll only give up that nonsensical idea that has taken possession of you. It's your happiness that I want, Rhoda, yours and Jeff's. And I know, oh, so much better than you do, what makes a woman happy. I can't die feeling that I have done my duty to my little girl and made sure of her happiness, unless she will promise me this. Will you do it, Rhoda?"

"Let me be the judge of my happiness, mother, as you were the judge of yours!"

"Your mother knows best, child! Take her word for it, and let her bless you with her last breath, as you'll always bless her if you do. It's the last thing she'll ever ask of you."

The invalid's tones were growing weaker and something querulous sounded in them as she repeated, "Promise me, Rhoda, promise!"

The linked hands upon Rhoda's neck loosened their hold and the tired arms slipped down. She bowed her head upon her mother's breast as she sobbed, "Let me think for a minute, mother, dear! It breaks my heart not to do what you want!"

"It breaks mine, Rhoda, that you don't. Oh, honey, let me die in peace and happiness! Promise me that you'll marry Jeff!"

Rhoda saw that her father had entered the room and was standing at her side. She sprang to her feet, threw her arms about his neck and with her head upon his shoulder burst into a passion of tears.

"Father, tell me what to do!" she wailed.

His arms were about her, his face upon her hair, and his tears were mingling with hers. In that supreme moment of grief, compassion and struggle the icy barriers that had kept their hearts apart melted away and they clung together in their common despair, groping through their sobs for the right thing to say and do.

Suddenly they were startled by a gay little laugh from the bed. "You've come at last, have you, Adeline, dearest! How late you are!" the dying woman exclaimed, holding out her hands in welcome. From her face the shadow had passed and in its place shone a girlish happiness. She was

back again among the friends of her youth, chatting and laughing with "dearest Adeline," and calling upon "mammy" to do this and that. And so, babbling of her girlhood's pleasures, she passed into the dark beyond.

## CHAPTER XXV

During the late summer and autumn of that year Rhoda and her father and their friends watched with the keenest interest, as did people all over the country, the struggle in Illinois between Lincoln and Douglas. In the Cincinnati and New York papers they read the speeches, printed at length, of both the aspirants for senatorial honors, and on many an evening, gathered on the veranda of the Ware home or, after the evenings grew cool, around the fireplace in the living-room, they discussed all the features of that famous intellectual wrestling match.

Horace Hardaker had been nominated for Congress by the Republican party and was conducting a vigorous campaign. Nevertheless, he found time to come frequently up the hill to Dr. Ware's house for these talks. Marcia Kimball came also, at first with her brothers, but after a little Rhoda observed that it was oftener with Hardaker that she made her appearance and always upon his arm that she leaned when they went away. With an inward smile Rhoda noticed too that Horace, with apparent unconsciousness, began to address his conversation mainly toward Marcia.

"I don't expect to be elected," he said one

evening, "that is, not this time. But I'm giving the ground a good, deep plowing, and there'll be a different crop to reap two years from now."

His opponent, a Douglas Democrat, won the day, but by so narrow a margin that Hardaker was almost as exultant as if he had been successful. "Two years more of the way things are going now," he declared, "and we'll sweep the country!"

"Suppose you do, what good will it do?" said old Mr. Kimball. "Your Republican party expressly says it won't interfere with slavery in the South."

"It will bring on a crisis," interjected Dr. Ware, "and a crisis is exactly the thing we want. The South won't stand a Republican president. And when she tries to leave the Union the upheaval will come."

Not long after the election Hardaker sought Rhoda in more buoyant mood than ever, to tell her that he and Marcia were to be married. She assured him that she was heartily glad, and really felt all that she said, and even more. But her sincere rejoicing did not prevent her from looking sadly out of her window that night and feeling that something very dear and pleasant had gone out of her life beyond all recovery. She would not, if she could, have held Hardaker's love in fruitless thrall, but it had been so comforting, so gratifying, to know how surely it was hers and she

had so grown to expect one of his recurrent proposals every year or so that it cost her a little wrench now to give it all up.

"He'll make Marcia a good, loving husband," she thought, "and with his talent and ambition he'll succeed. Oh, they'll be happy, and I'm glad."


Her eyes grew sad and the lines of her face drooped as she sat beside her window. And after a while she took out the little box with its treasure of letters and withered flower. She did not read the letters, of which there was now nearly a box full, but turned them over caressingly in her hands and now and then pressed one to her lips.

Rhoda was bridesmaid when Horace and Marcia were married in the early spring. "It's your third time, isn't it, dear," said Marcia as her friend draped about her shoulders the folds of her bridal veil. "I do hope it will be you yourself, next time!"

"So do I, Marcia!" said Rhoda frankly, looking up with a smile. "There isn't a girl anywhere who'd more willingly be a bride than I, if—if—if!"

"Rhoda, you're the dearest, bravest girl!" cried Marcia, squeezing her hand. "If I was in your place I'd be crying my eyes out instead of laughing like that!"

"Then I wouldn't have you for my bridesmaid



if you couldn't give your eyes a rest that long," rejoined Rhoda gaily.

Spring and summer came and went, and for Rhoda Ware the weeks passed with uneventful flow. Through their house there trickled a thin stream of slaves fleeing northward, sometimes half a dozen or more within a week and sometimes not more than one or two. The trouble and cost of recovering their runaway negroes, even when they were infrequently able to get possession of them again, had caused the southern slaveholders to give over their efforts. In these last years of the decade it was unusual for a fugitive to be pursued and therefore the traffic of the Underground was carried on with little risk.

Rhoda busied herself with these duties, the ordering of her father's household, her anti-slavery work and her reading. Gradually the thought grew up in her breast that she would like to study medicine. She talked the matter over with her father and he offered, if she wished, to send her to one of the medical colleges that within a few years had been opened for women. But she would not leave him alone and so, under his guidance, she spent her leisure time reading in his medical library, discussing his cases with him, and often going with him upon his visits.

Dr. Ware received an occasional brief letter from John Brown in which his scheme was referred to with cautious phrasing as a speculation in sheep.



Toward midsummer he wrote that he was getting his shepherds together and expected to collect a band of sheep in the Virginia mountains, where he thought there would be good pasturage, about the middle of October.


"He is bound to come into collision with the federal government very soon," said Dr. Ware to his daughter as they talked this letter over together. "Of course he knows that will be the end of his enterprise and of him too."

"He won't care," answered Rhoda, "what becomes of him if he can make just one thrust at slavery."

"That's true. And the more I think of it the more I believe that even if he fails in his first attempt, as he is very likely to do, it will be a good strong thrust that will make the South fairly stagger. I told him I'd wait to see whether or not he made a beginning before I decided about joining him. But I doubt very much, Rhoda, whether you and I will have a chance to work under John Brown."

"I'll be ready to go whenever you say the word, father," she said with grave earnestness.

Now and then a letter passed between Rhoda and Jefferson Delavan, a letter of intimate friendliness, telling of personal matters and mutual interests. Once only did he touch upon the slavery question, which formerly they had argued with such earnestness, and then he filled a long letter



with an endeavor to prove to her that the negro race had been benefited by slavery, that in taking it from its barbarous state and bringing it in contact with civilization the slaveholders had lifted it to a higher plane of moral and intellectual life.

When she replied she said merely, "No more of that, please, if you still love me! Each of us knows that the other's convictions are honest and deeply rooted. We can't agree, so let's not argue, but just enjoy our friendship."

Nor was there in their correspondence any mention of love, or of possible or impossible marriage. But toward the end of summer, when a little band of men was warily gathering in a Maryland farmhouse, one of Jeff's letters set Rhoda's heart to fluttering. There was in it, save for some terms of endearment which seemed to have flowed unconsciously from his pen, no putting into words of a lover's hopes. But she felt through every line the burning of the lover's heart. And a few weeks later there came a brief note saying, "I shall be in Hillside soon and shall count on seeing you."

For a day Rhoda's heart sang with joy, "He is coming, he is coming! I shall see him, have him here beside me!" and would listen to no warnings of her mind.

Then she wrote, "Don't come! I beg of you, Jeff, don't come! What is the use!" And lest

her courage might fail her, she quickly sealed and posted her missive.

But when the October woods were bright with flaming color, and the little band of men in the Maryland farmhouse were waiting for the order to march, and Rhoda and her father were saying to each other every morning, "There may be news to-day," Jefferson Delavan appeared at her door.

"I told you not to come!" she said, and gave him her hand, while face and eyes belied the meaning of her words. His heart gladdened at their sweet shining as he held her hand in both of his and answered, "And I disobeyed—because I couldn't help it." Then, for a moment, their starving, delighted gaze fed upon each other's eyes, until Rhoda suddenly felt that he was about to break into lover's speech. Impulsively she laid a finger across his lips. He seized and held it there while she exclaimed:

"Don't speak, Jeff, don't say anything. It's such a lovely day—the hills are so beautiful—let's have a ride together!"

He agreed, glad of anything that would insure her presence near him, and they were soon galloping over country roads and across the wooded hills, brilliant in the gala robes with which Nature celebrates her thanksgiving for another year of sun and life and growth.

As they rode, the motion and the wine-like air and the joy in her heart lifted Rhoda into exultant

mood, deepened the wild-rose bloom in her cheeks and kindled her serious eyes into sparkling gaiety. "Let me have this little time!" her heart pleaded. "It may be the last. After *that* has happened he may never come again!"


And so, with thrilling nerves and singing heart, the Cavalier in her breast dominated the Puritan and sent to the four winds warnings of conscience and thought of to-morrow. Forgotten was the safety of the three fugitive slaves, at that moment hiding in her cellar, forgotten the fateful Thing for whose birth in the Virginia mountains she had been waiting, cast away from her mind was all thought of the anti-slavery contest, nor was there room in her heart for zeal in its cause. She was mere woman, loving and beloved, and glorying inwardly in her power over her lover. Her Cavalier inheritance took possession of her and bade her snatch the pleasure of the hour. Her father's offspring dwindled away into the smallest recesses of her nature and it was her mother's daughter who sat in the saddle, slender and graceful, and with starry eye and alluring smile kindled fresh fires in her lover's breast.

With pride and pleasure she saw them burning in his face and eyes as he drew beside her and murmured, "Rhoda, you are so beautiful!" Her mirror had told her many times, and she had agreed in its verdict, that she was not beautiful. And so all the more precious to her was this tribute

of love, and more than once did she win it, as they rode and rode, during the long afternoon.

A sudden memory came of the tale of courtship her mother had told to her and Jeff, on that June night so long ago, and across her mind's eye there flitted the vision she had often called up, of the pretty, wilful girl and the resolute young man with his hand on her bridle, galloping, galloping— "And that was love—and this is love, and it is mine!" her heart sang. Quickly her brain flashed back the question, "Would I yield, as mother did, if—if—if—" And the Cavalier in her heart sang back, exulting, "I would! I would!"

On their way home they came to an old wood road and turned into it from the cross-country way upon which they had been galloping. Checking their horses they rode slowly down the brilliant avenue of gold and russet and crimson, talking, now earnestly, now gaily, upon one or another of the multitude of things, personal and impersonal, which to lovers can burgeon instantly into matters of moment and interest by the mere fact of mention in the loved one's voice. Gradually the road dwindled away and they came upon steeper hills and a rocky surface. But Rhoda knew where they were and said that by turning sharply to the eastward they could gain the high road. Dismounting they led their horses across the hills, the fallen autumnal glories billowing beneath their feet.



Already Rhoda's mood had begun to sober. The Puritan was claiming his own again. Down that wood road she had driven her buggy, on a winter day, to bring out the fugitive negro lad whom she had sent flying to the cave for safety from the pursuing marshal. They passed the cave itself, where, more than three years previous, she had hidden the mulatto, running for the freedom dearer than life from this very man who was bending near her now with ardent looks of love. She shivered a little as she remembered the slave's sullen resolution, the pistol in his hand, and the tone in which he had said, "I won't go back." As Jeff bent with loving solicitude to draw her wrap closer about her shoulders she was thinking, "And he said they were brothers."

They struck a path which climbed a steep hill, and when they came to a jutting rock Delavan looked around him with sudden recollection. "Why, I've been here before!" he exclaimed. "It was here I met you, dear, that day—don't you remember? What a long time you have made me wait, sweetheart, for your promise!" His lover's longing, made a hundredfold more imperious by the allurements there had been all the afternoon in her laugh, her voice, her smile, her lips, her eyes, her manner, would be put aside no longer, and he turned upon her with an impetuosity that would brook no protest.

"Do you, remember, dearest, the proof of my

love I gave you that day? I'm ready to give you, here on this same spot, another proof, a thousand times greater! It will sweep away everything that keeps us apart, Rhoda! Everything!"

She looked at him silently, sweet wonder parting her lips and shining starlike in her big gray eyes. Her cheeks were paler now, with the ebbing of the exultant tide that had kept her all the afternoon on its crest. But to him this soft, subdued mood bespoke the sweetheart ready to tremble into his embrace and made her all the more adorable. He seized her hand and she let it lie in his close, warm grasp as he went on:

"I have made up my mind to give up everything to our love. I will free all my niggers—for the sake of your dear conscience not one shall be sold—and see that they find places where they can earn their livings. Then I will sell my property and we will put this country and its accursed contentions behind us. We will go to England, dear heart, or France, and live where there will come hardly an echo of all this strife to disturb our blessed content and happiness!"

She dropped her eyes from his and for a long moment stood motionless while it seemed to her that her very heart stood still. With swift inner vision, like that of a drowning man, she saw those years of wedded life, long years of comradeship and love and deepest joy, with dear children growing up beside them, and her heart yearned toward

its peace and happiness with such urgency that she dared not try to speak.

"Think, Rhoda, dear," he was pleading, "think of the quiet, blissful years that are waiting for us! Our two hearts together, and nothing, nothing at all to come between them!"

Her very lips were pale with desire of it as she whispered: "I am thinking, and, oh, Jeff, the thought of it, the joy of it, almost makes my heart stop beating. But have you thought, dear, dear Jeff, what a sacrifice this will be for you? I know how much you love the South. Would you never regret it, never wish to come back and throw yourself into her service? If that should happen, it would be the end of happiness for us both, for I should know it—our hearts would be so close together—even if you didn't say a word. Have you thought of that, dear Jeff?"

He smiled at her with loving confidence. "I've thought that all out, dear heart. For weeks I've been thinking of it, and threshing it all out in my mind, until I feel quite sure of myself. I do love my dear Southland and as you know so well my ambition has always been to spend my life in her service. But there are plenty of other men who can do her work as well as I can, and not at the cost of their heart's love and life's happiness. I am willing to let them do it while I take my love and my happiness. My sweet! I knew your dear, generous heart would ask me that!" He



bowed over her hand, which he still held in his, and pressed it to his lips.

Her heart was pleading: "He is right. There are plenty of others who can do his work, and there are surely many, many who can do what little is possible for me better than I. Why not put it all aside and take the love and happiness that belong to us?" And then, like an icy grip upon her softening, yielding heart came remembrance of the Thing that was about to happen in the Virginia mountains.

She drew her hand from his and in sudden dismay walked apart a few paces, saying, "Let me think for a minute, Jeff!" She dropped her riding skirt, whose fulness she had been carrying over one arm, and its long black folds swept around her slender figure as she leaned against a tree with her face in her hands. So tall and straight and slim she looked, drooping against the tree trunk, that the fancy crossed his mind she was like some forsaken, grieving wood nymph, and all his body ached with the longing to enfold her in his arms and comfort whatever pain was in her heart. But his love as well as his courtesy forbade him to intrude upon her while she stood apart, and he waited for her to turn to him again.

Rhoda was thinking of what she knew was about to happen and of what it would mean to him. Her father had said that it would be like the sudden ringing of an alarm bell and that, how-

ever this initial attempt turned out, it might cause the whole South to take up arms at once and declare war. She knew how her lover's spirit would leap at such an emergency. Did she wish to put his love and his promise to such a test at the very beginning? Slowly she walked back and stood in front of him.

"Jeff, this is truly a wonderful proof of your love that you have given me!" Her voice was tremulous with desire of all she felt she was putting away, but she went bravely on: "I don't believe any other woman ever had such proof! Indeed," and she smiled tenderly at him, "I don't believe any other woman was ever loved quite so much. It makes me feel your love in my heart, oh, so much more precious than even it was before! But I want you to be quite sure, dear Jeff!"

"I am sure, sweetheart!" he broke in.

"But won't you wait a little while, two weeks, no, three weeks, before I—we decide? I ask you to go home, at once, and not to see me or write to me for three weeks more. And then you can let me know whether or not you still wish to put your ideals and ambitions aside for the sake of love. But I want you to consider the question then just exactly as if we had never talked of it before. You are not to feel yourself in the least bound by what you have told me to-day. If anything should happen between now and then that makes you feel that the South still has a claim upon

you, anything that would make you in the very least unwilling to—to carry out this plan, then I want you to tell me so frankly—with perfect frankness, dear Jeff, as perfect as our love.”

“And is that all the hope you will give me, dearest?” he pleaded. “No promise to take back with me?”

She was standing beside the path, on the rising ground a little above him, and she leaned toward him, resting her hands lightly upon his shoulders as she said, her face all tenderness:

“Dear Jeff, it is for your sake I am asking it!”

He seemed scarcely to hear what she said, and touched her cheek with a caressing palm as he exclaimed, “Rhoda, my sweet, your face is like a guardian angel’s!”

Before Jefferson Delavan reached Fairmount again the Thing had happened that made the North gasp with wonder and set the South beside itself with fear and rage. The amazing audacity of John Brown’s attack upon Harper’s Ferry and the rankling distrust between the two sections make reasonable, to impartial eyes of a later day, the alarming significance which the southern people, especially those in the border states, saw in Brown’s foredoomed enterprise. The slaveholders of Kentucky were aroused to almost as extreme a pitch of angry apprehension and defiance as were the people of Virginia.

Rhoda Ware had not to wait even three weeks for the expected letter from Jefferson Delavan.

"You were right," he wrote. "You saw the obstacles that lie between us more clearly than I did—or, perhaps, you had more information than I of the treacherous lengths to which the North would dare to go in the desire to overthrow the ordinary rights of a state and to undermine the power of the government under which both sections have solemnly sworn to live. This attempt to incite the slaves to insurrection and the butchery of their masters proves to all of us that neither property nor life is safe in the South. At any moment another plot may break forth, no man can tell where, and be more successful than this one was. The South needs now, more than she ever did before, every one of her sons whom she can trust. I cannot desert her in her hour of peril. From the bottom of my heart I thank you, Rhoda, that you made it possible for me to remain, without dishonor, in the position where every instinct of duty and honor and loyalty demands that I stay. It was like you to know that, much as I love you, love would have to yield to honor if it came to a test between the two, and it has made me love you all the more, if that were possible, to know that your love is so rich and noble and generous.

"God knows what the future may hold for us two. For the first time since our love began I

can see no hope for us. The feeling between the North and the South grows intolerable and the bonds between them cannot last much longer. As long as the South and her interests are in danger, my conscience, my sense of duty, my loyalty, all my ideals and aspirations, bid me stay here. And here I know you will not come.

"But whatever happens, dear, I shall always thank God that I have had the privilege of knowing and loving you, while the knowledge that you, such a peerless woman as you, have loved me will be as long as I live the most precious treasure of my heart. I have many dear memories of our love, but the dearest of them all is of that last day we had together, that splendid ride, when you were so adorable, and of all the sweet pictures of you that I cherish the sweetest of all is of your face as you leaned toward me in the wood and said, 'It is for your sake, dear Jeff.'

"Only God knows whether or not we shall ever see each other again. But I shall always love you, and as long as we both live I shall treasure in my heart the belief that you still love me. Good-by, dear heart."

"At last, it is all over," Rhoda said to herself when she had read the letter. "He sees, at last, as I did so long ago, that there is no hope for us. No—he sees none, now, but I can a little. John Brown has brought the war ten years nearer, father says, and any time it may come. And the

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war will end slavery. But it's best not to hope too much."

She took out the box of his letters and read them all over again, touching them tenderly and kissing the withered rose. "I'd better burn them all now," she told herself, "and try not to think so much about it after this."

With such pain in her heart as might have been in Abraham's when he led Isaac to the altar, she carried her little love treasure to the fire. But even as she held it poised over the flames her resolution failed her. It was too much a part of herself and she could not do it. The little box was put away again in its hiding place and in the months that followed, whenever the ache in her breast would not be hushed in any other way, she solaced her love and longing by reading the letters over and over again, until she almost knew them, word for word.

## CHAPTER XXVI

A year and a half and more went by before Rhoda again saw Delavan. The campaign of 1860, with its grim earnestness and sober exaltation, had passed. She had been stirred by it to her heart's core, as had all men and women of the North, and had shared her father's satisfaction over the result. Hers was indeed an even deeper and gladder satisfaction than his, for to passionate abhorrence of slavery and the belief that now was the beginning of its end was added her secret small hope that afterward might come the fulfilment of her long denied love.

"We mustn't forget, Rhoda," her father said as they talked over the results of the election, "that probably only a rather small percentage of those who voted for Lincoln want to have slavery abolished in the states where it already exists. They really think the national government has no right to interfere. But if there is war, and undoubtedly there will be, a man of Lincoln's shrewd common-sense will know that by freeing the slaves he will cut off the South's right hand. With such a man as he is in the president's chair I feel confident, though a good many abolitionists don't, that we can look forward to the end of slavery."

The southern states were leaving the Union and the Confederacy had been organized. Rhoda knew that Kentucky was rent almost to her every hearthstone with discussion of whether North or South should have her loyalty. Charlotte had lately written: "Everybody is all torn into strips over the question whether or not Kentucky shall join the Confederacy. Nobody talks or thinks or dreams of anything else. But Lloyd and I are going to secede, whether Kentucky does or not."

Now and then, at long intervals, had come a brief letter from Jefferson Delavan. But he said nothing in any of these missives of love and but little of the mighty questions that were absorbing the minds and hearts and souls of men, women and children, North and South, and her replies were of the same sort. It was as if two loving but far divided souls, journeying through space, sought now and then by a faint call to bridge the distance between them.

The tense, dark days of Lincoln's inauguration were over, the guns of Sumter had cleared away the last clouds of uncertainty, and war was at hand.

The lilacs were in bloom again and Rhoda, moving slowly down the path, broke off here and there a branch and presently stood at the front gate, her fragrant burden gathered loosely into one arm against her white dress. In her delight in their delicate beauty and savor she bent her face to the flowers, forgetting for the moment the



things of the outside world. When she lifted it again Jefferson Delavan stood before her.

"I have come to say good-by, Rhoda," was his greeting, as he entered the gate.

"Good-by?— You are—going—" she stammered.

"I am going to join the fortunes of the South," he replied, as they walked up the path. "Kentucky has been false to her sister states and deserted them when they need her most. By a single vote she has decided upon neutrality. You, Rhoda, can understand what a bitter dose that is for me."

"You can't endure it?" she hesitated as they turned into the walk to the grape arbor.

"No, I can't, and there are many other Kentuckians who feel as I do. I am going at once to join the southern army, and Corey and Muirhead and a dozen others that I know are going too."

"Father has joined the Union army as a surgeon and I am going as a nurse."

They had reached the arbor and stood facing each other, she with her armful of lilacs still held against her white dress, both too much absorbed to be quite conscious of their actions. A sober smile curved by ever so little the grim line of his lips.

"Then you will be fighting for your side as well as I for mine, though in a different way. But across the battlefields, Rhoda, I shall hear your

heart calling mine, and I shall know too that it is telling me to fight right on."

"Yes," she broke out earnestly, "I know that you are fighting for your convictions and your ideals and you will not be worthy of my love if you don't fight until you either win or are conquered. I don't want you to compromise, or to yield, until you have fought to the last drop of your strength."

"It's going to be a bitter struggle and a long one, whatever the most of them, on both sides, think now. In the South there isn't much belief that the North will fight, or can fight. But I know better, Rhoda. You have taught me better, you and your father. You have made me understand what determination there is at the bottom of all this."

"It's a war between two ideals," she said, "whatever else they may say it is. But it's really that, between two ideals of civilization."

"And men," he added quickly, "always fight for their ideals as they do for nothing else. It will be to the last gasp."

She looked away and shuddered. "Oh, it is all so horrible, even to think of! But it is a long and horrible iniquity that has caused it and must now be paid for. Rachel Benedict told me once that we must ourselves pay with sweat and stripes for the evil that we do. I believe it's true, and the North and the South must pay together for

all this long evil of slavery, for they are both responsible. But this war will end it."

He smiled upon her indulgently. "Can you think so, Rhoda, you, who understand how we feel and how determined we are?"

She stepped back and proudly lifted her head. Into her face came the look of exaltation he had seen there, in this same arbor, long before. It seemed to remove her far from him, and therefore set his heart to throbbing all the more with longing for her.

"Yes," she said, "this war will end it, because God is on our side. And afterward—oh, Jeff!"—her face melted to tenderness again—"beyond—after the end, after God has spoken and slavery has been ended, then there will be peace, and for us—" her voice dropped low—"happiness!"

"God be the judge between us, Rhoda Ware," he exclaimed, "as to which is right! Will you accept His judgment, as He speaks it in battle, and promise to be my wife when the war is over, whatever He has said?"

Again her face was lifted, glowing with exaltation. "God will never allow such an atonement for evil-doing as this war will be," she said solemnly, "to be crowned by that very evil itself. With faith in Him—I promise!"

Scarcely had the words left her tongue when she found herself swept to his breast and his lips upon her brow, her eyes, her mouth.

"Rhoda, my love, my love," he whispered, "it is a long good-by that lies before us, perhaps even as long as it has been since I first begged for your love, here among these vines."

"And there are battles and dangers, oh, so many," she whispered back, "between now and—the end."

"But I have a talisman that will carry me safe through it all, to the end—and you. See, my sweet, how long I have kept it!" From an inner pocket he took a little package and showed her a withered rose, the mate of the one she herself so treasured. "I have kept it there, next to my heart, ever since the night you gave it me, for my thoughts, five years ago!"

She looked at it with wondering love, pressed it to her lips and listened with a sweet smile upon them as he said, putting it back again: "It shall lie there always, dear heart, until all my thoughts are yours and yours are mine. And it will always tell me, as plainly as if with your own dear lips, to fight to the uttermost!"

Again she lifted her head proudly. "Yes, to the uttermost, Jeff! For that way only can your eyes be opened!"

He was gone, and she sat alone in the arbor, with her lilacs pressed to her bosom, and listened as the strains of martial music came to her ears. It was a band playing, down town, where volun-

teers were being drilled. She could hear the tramp of feet, the rattle of musketry, and the words of command.

Louder and louder the sound seemed to grow in her ears until it became the booming of unnumbered cannon and the tramp, tramp, tramp of a million men. The smoke of battle dimmed her eyes and all around her she seemed to hear the cries and groans of mangled and dying men. With white lips she whispered to herself, "With bloody sweat and stripes we must pay—it is God's law!"

Slowly her features relaxed, and presently, with a tender smile curving her lips, she buried her face in the lilac blooms. For the awful sights and sounds had faded away and she had seen a vision of the afterward.

THE END













